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Seizer of Eagles



HE NEARLY LIFTED ME FROM THE GROUND AS HE FURIOUSLY
BEAT THE AIR WITH HIS GREAT WINGS (page 218)

Seizer of Eagles

BY

JAMES WILLARD SCHULTZ

AUTHOR OF "THE GOLD CACHE," "LONE BULL'S MISTAKE"
"THE WAR-TRAIL FORT," ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY
FRANK E. SCHOONOVER



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NOTE

This is a true story ; I have written it
just as Old Sun told it to me.

J. W. S.

U. S. 690456

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Seizer of Eagles



CHAPTER I

IN the long ago time of my youth, near sunset of a day in the New Grass moon, we saw Lone Man coming into camp with a large eagle upon his back. He was very tall, was Lone Man, yet the spread of the wings of the eagle was far more than the height of him. As he came on, the widespread wings danced in time to his steps; the broad tail of beautiful white, black-tipped feathers fluffed against his high-piled hair braids; the head of the bird swayed below the level of his knees.

As he passed the lodges of the people, his eyes modestly upon his steps, men and women gave him much praise, and said one to another: "Sun loves this Lone Man, seizer of eagles; he has given him great power."

As he passed my grandmother and me, where we

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sat in front of our poor little lodge, she cried out loudly: "O Sun! Favor always this seizer of your sacred flyers in the far-up blue! O Sun! Give him long and happy life, I pray you!"

And at that the man smiled at her, oh, so pleasantly, and in his deep and powerful voice answered: "I am grateful for your prayer for me, O elder sister!"

Ha! How his words lifted our hearts! He was not our relative, he was of another clan; we were very proud that he claimed relationship with us, poorest of all the poor in the great camp. I watched him go on to his beautiful lodge, its white skin painted with four large buffalo bulls in black, and below them a row of black-painted ravens, and then, turning, I said to my grandmother: "I want to be, I shall be, like him, a seizer of eagles!"

"So you may be when you reach his age — if you seek constantly the favor of Sun and he gives you, as he has given Lone Man, some of his great power," she answered.

"But that is too far off! I want now to become a

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seizer of eagles! Now in this time of my youth!" I cried.

"Hush! Don't talk so crazily! Well you know that boys or young men may not attempt that dangerous work; that only great and well-aged Sun priests — and but few even of them — become seizers of the far-blue flyers," she scolded.

I watched Sun go down behind the great mountains, still white with winter snow, and how I wished that, like our far-back ancestor, Scar Face, I could trail him to his far-off island home and beg him to give me a powerful medicine, something that would enable me, boy that I was, to seize all the eagles that I wanted: tens of eagles; hundreds of them. The air suddenly became cold; we went inside to my mother, broiling some buffalo meat for our evening meal.

Only two winters back we had been well off, for my father kept our lodge well supplied with hides and furs and fat meats, and our horse herd numbered more than fifty head. And then he went to war, leading a party of seven to raid the camp of

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the Assiniboinés, and none of them ever returned. How we mourned for him — still mourned for him! Soon after his going, we lost our horses, an enemy war party driving them off one night, every one of them. With the passing of my father, the support of our lodge rested upon me, and I had seen but sixteen winters. Men there were, some of them great warriors and rich, who offered to marry my mother and care for the three of us, but she would have none of them; to all she answered that her man was waiting for her in the Sand Hills and she belonged to him and to him alone. Well, the people were kind to us; this one and that one gave us a horse, slow old animals, but enough of them to enable us to move camp. I herded horses for one and another of the warriors and they gave us what meat we needed, and now and then a buffalo hide, sometimes the skin of an elk or deer.

In this New Grass moon I was beginning my eighteenth summer, and was now keeping our lodge supplied with all the meat and hides that we could use. I had a good bow and a quiverful of sharp

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arrows. Kind-hearted men loaned me their fast runners and I would join in the chase of a herd of buffalo and kill several of the big animals. Now and then I managed to kill deer and elk; enough of them for my mother to tan all the soft leather that we needed for our clothing. But just to keep the three of us fed and clothed did not satisfy me; I wanted to have fast buffalo horses of my own; a big lodge; a gun; beaver traps; blankets and pretty clothes from the trader for my mother and grandmother. There was but one way for me to get all these things, and that way was by the war trail; to raid the camps of our enemies and trade some of the horses I would take for the white men's goods. But no war party would take me on, even as a servant. I was too young, the chiefs told me. I had not endured the sacred fast and had no Sun power, so would but bring bad luck to any war party that I joined. They said, also, that I was still too young to go out and fast. That I must cease childish playing; quiet down and frequent the lodges of the Sun priests and listen to their wise talk; then, after two

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more winters, I could go out and fast with good hope that the gods would heed my prayers and give me of their wonderful power.

But now, on this New Grass moon evening, and regardless of my grandmother's words, I believed that I saw a way quicker than that of the war trail to the riches I wanted. Eagle tail feathers were the most valuable of all the things that our people used. A single tail of them was worth ten good horses, or twenty beaver skins; and at the fort of the Red-coats here in the North, or the fort of the Long Knives, south on Big River, one could get a good gun for forty beaver skins, traps for four skins each, blankets for four skins. I clapped my hands and cried out to my mother: "Now, in this summer that is just here, I shall become a seizer of eagles! Before winter comes again, you and grandmother and I shall have all the white men's goods that we need, and a herd of fine horses too!"

My mother smiled across the fire at me, the loving, pitying, patient smile that mothers give their young, and gently shook her head as she answered:

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“Oh, not this summer, my son! Not for many, many summers to come; not until you are as old as Lone Man, and like him, a priest of Sun!”

“Just what I told him!” said my grandmother.

“I don’t care if I am young!” I cried. “My arms are strong! I know that I have the strength to seize an eagle, pull him down into a pit, and crush the life from his body!”

“And no doubt you have, too, that other power, Sun power, that will keep your face and hands safe from the eagle’s beak and claws,” my grandmother exclaimed, frowning at me.

“Understand, my son, that the beak and claws of the eagle are as poisonous as the fangs of a rattlesnake,” said my mother. “Flesh that is pierced by them swells, turns black, and the seizer so stricken soon dies. That is why so very few even of the Sun priests become seizers of eagles. They fear the black death!”

“Ha! Who cares for the bird’s head! I shall seize eagles! I shall, I shall seize eagles!” I loudly asserted, and made my mother laugh; but my

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grandmother frowned still more deeply as she leaned forward and barked to me: "Do try to cease your crazy chatter, magpie!"

I ate the last small mouthful of my portion of meat, took up my robe and went outside. Night had come and the lodges of the great camp were all redly glowing with the little fires within them. In all of them the people were eating their evening meal, and happily talking and laughing, and I said to myself that I would be happy, too; that, no matter what my grandmother said to discourage me, I would not be discouraged! Beginning right then, that very evening, I would seek and seek all possible ways to become a seizer of eagles, and never turn back on my trail to it. In the bright moonlight I saw three or four of my boy friends approaching; they were coming to call me to play with them. I went around behind the lodge, and as they entered it I slipped off across camp to Lone Man's lodge, and with fast-beating heart raised the door curtain and stepped inside; stood open-mouthed before the fire, nervously plucking at the edges of

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my robe. I had thought to find the great man alone with his family; instead, I had come in upon a gathering of chiefs and warriors. Several of them were seated upon his right; on his left there was not a vacant place all the way around the circle to the doorway; his wives and young filled all the space on my left. He was speaking as I entered, and now paused and looking up at me inquired:

“Yes, my son. What want you?”

“Nothing. Nothing. I just came in,” I stammered, expecting that he would tell me that I could turn about and leave.

But no! Instead of that he said to me: “Be seated, then, if you can find a place.”

How his kind words lifted me. There was space for me at the side of his youngest wife, sitting nearest the doorway. I stepped back and got down beside her, and she gave me a smile and squeezed my hand as she said: “Kyi! Little Otter, good son of a good mother, I am proud that you sit beside me. But a little time from now and you will be sitting over there!” And

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she pointed to her man's right where were seated two great chiefs.

Let me explain that a Sun priest named me Little Otter when I was born. Like all boys, I was anxious for the time to come when, because of some brave thing that I had done, I should be entitled to stand before the people and be given a new — a warrior name.

“Well, as I was about to say when the boy came in,” Lone Man went on, with a glance around at his guests, “it was soon after sunrise that I seized the eagle I brought in. I then quickly put more liver in the side of my stuffed wolf, carefully replaced the roof sticks that I had scattered when I made my seizure, and again lying down, waited for another eagle to appear. Sun climbed up and up in the blue and none appeared. Certain things I did to bring another, and at last, after Sun passed the middle and began to descend into the west, I saw one sailing around and around far above me. He circled for a very long time, keeping at the same height, and I feared that he never would come

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down. At last I repeated the things that I had done to call him from his far-off quest of food, and presently down he came swift as lightning and making that lightning-like loud ripping of the blue that causes the heart of the seizer to beat fast with hope.

“Ha! When he had come down so near that I could plainly see the bright eyes in his head, he spread his tail and reset his wings and turned quickly up and then off to the south out of my sight, and never came back. I could not understand that. Do all that I would, I could not call him back. At last I gave up. I thrust aside my roof covering and stood up, and was face to face with three big wolves, lying all in a row not ten steps from me. They sprang up, stared at me, and turned and ran off down the butte. Was n’t I angry at them! They had lain there all day, no doubt, and of course kept the eagle from me! And so I came home. I think it very strange that the wolves came and lay down so near me, and remained there for so long a time.”

“No, I don’t think it strange,” said one of the

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guests. "They smelled the buffalo liver that you had stuck into the side of your stuffed wolf skin, and they wanted it; but they also got some scent of you, so just lay down, waiting for night. In the darkness they intended to sneak in and seize the liver."

All the guests agreed that the speaker was right. Lone Man filled another pipe, lit it, and it went the round of the circle. The talk turned to other things, but I paid no attention to it. I sat on and on beside the woman, thinking, thinking until my head ached. Like one in a dream I saw the pipe smoked out; presently refilled and passed around again. At last the host knocked the ashes from the big bowl and told the men that they could go. They filed out past me, and when the last one of them had dropped the door curtain in place, the women and children moved back to their different couches. And still I sat there, now almost bursting with a question that I wanted to ask, yet feared to put into words.

The great man eyed me two or three times, and

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at last said: "There is something you want, my son?"

"Oh, yes, there is something! I want to be a seizer of eagles! Oh, tell me! Tell me what are those things that you do to call the eagles to you from their far-away flying?" I cried.

"Kyai-yo! But what a crazy boy this is!" droned the great one's head wife. I never had liked, and now as she uttered those taunting words I hated, her.

But Lone Man gave me a pleasant smile and his eyes were very kind as he answered: "My son, you ask of me the impossible; that which Sun has revealed to me in my sleeping visions I can reveal to no one. It seems to me you should have known that."

"Oh, I did know it, but I thought that, perhaps — perhaps — " I stammered, and sprang up and fled from the lodge, that head wife's shrill laughter following me out into the night. I ran home; burst into the lodge and tumbled down upon my couch. I was so low-hearted that tears came into my eyes!

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“What troubles you?” my mother demanded.

“I asked Lone Man what he did to call eagles to him, and his sits-beside-him woman said that I was crazy — laughed at me,” I answered.

“She spoke truth; you are crazy; only a crazy one would ask a Sun priest to tell that which is between him and the Above Ones!” my grandmother exclaimed.

“I thought that he might give me at least a hint of what he does in his pit on the butte top — ”

“Oh, why are you so cross, so sharp-tongued? It must be that you hate him, your very own grandson!” my mother interrupted.

“I am cross with him for his own good; to make him see his mistakes; to keep him straight on the trail that he must follow!” my grandmother sharply told her.

“Well, you need n’t shout at him so loudly that the whole camp turns ears to listen to your scoldings!”

I don’t know what more was said, for I was up again and hurrying from the lodge. I ran across

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camp to the circle of the Fights Alone clan, and pausing and listening at the doorway of a great Sun priest, heard no talk. I entered and found the old man alone with his old wife. He was half-blind and asked who had come in; she told him, and he motioned me to a seat on his left, and at once seemed to forget my presence, staring dully at the fire and murmuring to himself. He straightened up with a start when I said to him that I had come to ask his help: "Tell me, oh, tell me how I may become a seizer of eagles — not many, many winters hence, but right now in the summer that has come with this New Grass moon," I pleaded.

It was a long time before he answered, slowly, in low voice, never ceasing his dull staring at the fire: "We were five, five seizers of eagles, but Old Sun, greatest seizer of us all, is dead and so we are but four; Lone Man, Black Bull, Yellow Antelope, and myself, and, blind, I no longer go to the pits. Together we made a vow by Sun that we would never teach any one our seizing secrets, and we keep our vow!"

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I looked across the fire at the old woman; she nodded her head to me, signed to me that it was best I go. I went. I remembered Old Sun, he had died early in the winter and in very old age, more than eighty winters. I said to myself that I would earn the right to his name, soon earn it. It was a good name, a great name, Old Sun. I stood still and looked up and cried: "O Night Light! Help me — ask your husband to help me in all that I undertake to do!" And I knew that she understood. I felt better as I returned home.

Late though it was, I found my mother and grandmother still sitting up, both embroidering moccasins for me by the light of the little fire. I did not much care what I wore, but they said that, poor though we were, I should not go about in mean clothing; they kept me well supplied with shirts, leggins, moccasins of soft-tanned, clean, white leather of deer; and leather wraps for summer, warm robes for winter wear. I was always as well dressed as the sons of the richest men of the tribe.

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"This time, doubtless, you have been over in Mountain Chief's lodge," said my grandmother, as I sat down upon my couch.

"Yes. And there learned something; he, and all the other seizers of eagles of this tribe, long ago vowed by Sun that they would tell no one their seizing secrets."

"Mean, stingy men they are!" my mother exclaimed.

"Are not!" my grandmother cried.

"Let us not talk about them," I said. "Now, this night, it is plain to me what I must do to follow the trail that I have chosen. Now, right now, I cease to be one of these, my father's people! South we go to your people, my mother! I feel that some of them will help me!"

"No! No! I say no! As your father was, so are you, a member of this tribe, and must ever be!" my grandmother shouted to me.

I looked from her to my mother, now bent over and shielding her face with her hands and crying. My grandmother turned to her, scowled at her,

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and said, threateningly: "Deer Woman! Stop that! I warn you—"

"Now, at last, I shall say it, that I have long been wanting to say! I shall no longer fear you, nor any one," cried my mother as she suddenly sat up and faced the other. "He, here, is much more me than he is you! I bore him, he is part of my body, it is for me, not you, to say what he shall do! Ever since his father died, I have wanted to return to my very own people — my son's people, too. It shall be as he says; we go to them!"

As she ceased speaking, I am sure that we both braced ourselves against that we felt was coming, a mighty scolding, a very thunder of words. But, no! For the first time in her life that stern, hard-willed old woman suddenly wilted; she drooped over in her seat; the hard light went out of her eyes and her lips parted wide; as one blinded, she felt about for her leather wrap, took it up, and went slowly out into the night. We stared after her; at the door curtain as it settled back into place; and then at one another.

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And then I said: "At last! For two years she has ruled us, scolded us! You are brave, my mother! You have freed us!"

"My son, keep this in mind: she loves you, even as she did your father, her only son. You must ever be good to her," my mother answered.

"Of course! But from now on you and I manage our own lives."

We prepared to sleep. As we covered ourselves with our robes, we heard the old woman wailing far out on the plain beyond the edge of camp, calling over and over my father's name, and that made us very sad.

And now I must explain that my father had been a member of the Kaina tribe of our great Black-foot people, and that my mother belonged to the Small Robes clan of the Pikuni, the southernmost of the three tribes. At this time the Kaina were encamped on Belly River, and close up to the foot of the great mountains; the Pikuni were three days' travel south of us, on Bear River, and the other tribe, the Siksika, were away north of us, some-

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where on Bow River. How did there come to be three tribes of us, speaking the one language? I will tell you:

In the very long ago, soon after Old Man made the world, there was in a far, wooded country a man who had three sons, all married. Game became very scarce, so hard to find that the people began to starve. So one day this man said to his sons: "If we remain here we must all die. I propose that we move to a new country; just keep going until we do find plenty of game." The sons thought that a good plan, and ordered their wives to pack the dogs. They then all set out, the old man and his wives, the three sons and their wives and children, and traveled for a very long time, finding very little game, barely enough to keep life in their bodies. And then, when they were very low-hearted, they one day passed from the timber out upon a wide grassy plain, and saw upon it great herds of buffalo, animals that they had never seen before. They made camp at once and the three sons tried to kill some of the buffalo, but

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could get nowhere near them. That night, there in sight of all those great herds of strange, black animals, the four families went to bed hungry. But in the night the old man had a vision; was told what to do. In the morning he prepared a black medicine, rubbed some of it upon his eldest son's feet, and the young man ran out, ran so swiftly that he chased a herd of buffalo, overtook it, and killed all the animals that the little camp could use. That evening, after all had feasted, the old man said to his eldest son: "Because of your great deed this day I give you a new name. I name you, Sik-sika!"

At that the other two sons were somewhat jealous. They asked their father to give them new names — honor names. He thought for a time and said to them that he could not do that until they had performed great deeds. He would give them some of the black medicine, of course, so that they could kill buffalo, but they must go away, go out upon discovery and earn new names. The two decided to do that. One went off south, the other

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east, and were gone a very long time. He who went south returned with a pack of strange and fine clothing that he had taken from enemies he killed, so his father named him Pikuni. The other son brought scalps and weapons of enemy chiefs that he had killed, so his father named him Kaina. Thus was the beginning of our three tribes — Siksika, Blackfeet; Pikuni, Wearing Apparel; Kaina, Many Chiefs.

So, now, here was I, half Pikuni and half Kaina, and because of my father, a member of the Kaina tribe. As our little lodge fire burned down to dim coals, my grandmother returned from her mourning, and when she had come in and put a few sticks on to blaze, she said to me: "Yes, we will go to the Pikuni, but promise me, son of my son, that you will some day return with me to these, your father's people."

And I answered: "This I promise you; when I shall have earned the right to the great name I want, I will return and ask the Kaina Sun priests to give it me."

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Singing in our lodge awoke me; happy singing. I could hardly believe my ears. For the first time since the passing of my father, two winters back, my mother was singing! She was already beginning to pack up our few belongings. She called to me to hurry; to go to the river and bathe, then bring in the horses. As soon as I had done that we would eat, saddle and pack the animals, and start south to the Pikuni. I saw that my grandmother was putting her own poor things into a couple of worn old parfleches. I saw, too, that she was very sad; that there were tears in her eyes; that her hands were trembling. As I passed out of the lodge, I told her to take heart; that in time she would be glad enough of what we were setting out to do.

Into the river I splashed with a number of my boy friends, and then, while we were dressing, told them that I was leaving them, was going that very morning on the trail south to the Pikuni. They begged me not to go. While I was bringing in the horses, they ran to their homes and spread the news, and by the time I got in with the animals,

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there in front of our lodge were Eagle Ribs and several of his under-chiefs scolding my mother, telling her that she must be crazy, else she would not think of going off south — just she and grandmother, with only a boy to protect them. The plains were alive with enemy war parties; we would never live to see Bear River and the camp of the Pikuni.

CHAPTER II

MY mother looked from them to me, and I said to them: "Enemies or not, we must go! I have to go! And, somehow, it is given me to feel that we shall survive the dangers and in good time enter the camp of the South People."

"As he says, so do we," my mother told the chiefs.

"I am old; it matters not how soon I go to the Sand Hills," said my grandmother.

And at that the chiefs turned angrily away, Eagle Ribs saying to us over his shoulder: "Well, we have warned you; it will be by no fault of ours that you all die, somewhere out there!"

We went inside and had a hurried meal, then down came our lodge, and many women friends helped my mother saddle and pack the horses. My young friends surrounded me, wondering how I could have the heart to part from them. Came more men and advised me to give up all thought

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of going south until such time as the tribe would go to camp and hunt with the Pikuni, several moons later on. I told them, as I had the chiefs, that I could not wait; that I felt an urge to go, and must obey it. Our three pack-horses were soon loaded; the poles of our little lodge were lashed to the saddle sides; then we three mounted each one slow old animal and I took the lead. As we drew out from camp, my grandmother cried so pitifully that all the camp dogs mourned with her; not until we were far out upon the plain did she dry her tears. All that time I kept watching my mother; her eyes were shining and there was a smile upon her lips. I heard her murmur: "At last! At last I am to rejoin my very own people!"

It was not long after noon of that day when we topped a low ridge and looked down into the valley of Many Dead Chiefs River, the southernmost of the streams that flow north into the Always-Winter land. Up and down the sparsely timbered valley as far as we could see, and beyond it up the long slope of Little River Ridge, were countless

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bands and herds of buffalo and antelope resting, grazing, and others going to and from the water.

We brought our horses to a stand and watched them for a time, and my mother said to me: "If we go on across the river they will run from us in all directions, and so bring down upon us any enemies that may be in hiding hereabout."

"We are not going on," I told her. "We will follow down this coulee to the river and cache ourselves in the willows until night."

The coulee headed right where we stood; we rode into it, and down it to the water without frightening any of the game, and there, after watering our animals, we unpacked them and picketed them in the high, thick brush, and rested and slept until sundown. We then ate some pemmican, packed up and forded the river, and drew out of the valley, leaving the mountain trail of our people and heading southeast. There was no moon; band after band of buffalo that we could not see went rushing out of our way with great thunder and rattle of hooves. We did not care; no enemies could see the

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cause of the commotion. The gentle night wind was heavy with the odor of new-growing sage and greasewood crushed by the hooves of the fleeing game; it was very pleasant in our nostrils.

Said my mother: "Oh, how I love it, that strong, crushed-weeds odor! It makes me light-hearted; I just want to sing of my happiness, sing as loud as I can!"

"Oh, do so! Our enemies out there in the darkness will be so glad to hear you!" my grandmother scolded.

And just then, close on our right, a lone wolf began to howl, and others, near and far and all around, took up his cry. Long and loud and deep they howled. "I do not need to sing; they sing for me," said my mother. Oh, how we loved it, the howling of the wolves! It was thus that they talked with one another. There have been times when I felt that I was almost on the point of understanding what they said.

All through the night we plied our quirts and kept our slow old animals on a trot. We early

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crossed the North Fork of Little River, then its South Fork, these the northernmost waters of Big River (the Missouri), and at the edge of the last one we got down and drank.

Then my mother laughed happily and said to me: "There, my son! We have drunk from one of our very own streams! Oh, how I love it, and all those other streams of our Pikuni country, away off there to the south! Beautiful streams in beautiful wooded valleys. Valleys rich with berries in summer, and in winter warmly sheltering the people from Cold-Maker's winds and storms. How much more pleasant is our country than the North country of the Kaina and the Siksika!"

My grandmother snorted. "Ha! What nothing-talk that is!" she cried. We did not answer her. "And anyhow," she went on, "this South country belongs to us Kaina, and the Siksika, just as much as it does to the Pikuni."

"Yes, that is true, but I notice that the Kaina and the Siksika camp in the North the most of the time, leaving the Pikuni to fight alone the Crows,

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Assiniboines, and other enemies who would take this rich South country from us," my mother told her. And to that she could make no reply.

Soon after daylight we struck Cutbank River, just above its walled canyon in the prairie, and made camp in a grove of cottonwoods and willows. As soon as we had taken the loads off the horses, I drove them to water, and in a sandbar running out into the stream I came upon the fresh tracks of a war party of twenty or more men. In the wet, hard sand at the edge of the water were the imprints of their hands and knees where they had sprawled out to drink, and from there they had gone on up the valley. My heart beat fast as I stared at the timber upstream, and at the slopes of the valley as far up as I could see them. Not a head of any kind of game was in sight. I feared that the enemy might be in hiding for the day close to us. I hurried the horses back into the timber, and told the women what I had found, and they were so frightened that for once even my grandmother was speechless. We resaddled and repacked the horses

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in no time, and mounting, and plying our quirts with all our strength, rode out of that timber on the jump, the dragging lodge-poles filling the valley with the noise of their rattling. Across the river we went with great splashings, and out over the open bottom and up the slope to the edge of the plain, and there made a halt and looked back. Right where I had watered the horses the enemy were lined along the sandbar, staring up at us, and as we came to a stand they let off their guns and some of the balls thudded into the ground very close to us; and then they let out loud, mocking yells, and we lashed our horses and got out of their sight and kept going as fast as we could off across the plain.

On a high ridge midway between Cutbank and the Two Medicine Lodges River we let our sweat-wet horses rest, and looked back at the trail that we had made, and saw that the enemy were not following us. We remained there a long time and made sure of that, and talked about our narrow escape from them, and gave thanks to Sun for it.

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I said then, and I believe to this day, that Sun led me to that sandbar and those enemy tracks in it. There they were, those twenty and more men, hiding close by — up the river a little way; had I watered the horses below the sandbar — well, we should never have left that timber, for that was the one place in a long shore-line that revealed the enemy tracks; above and below, slopes of coarse stones and large rocks ran down into the stream; even a passing herd of buffalo would have left no trail in them.

We went on as soon as our horses were rested, and at noon struck the Two Medicine Lodges River, so named because, in a summer in the long ago, the Pikuni and the Kaina each built a lodge to Sun in its lower valley. We made camp beside the river in a long, wide, timberless bottom, and after watering the horses, we picketed them close by, removing their packs, but not the saddles. Here we felt fairly safe. Enemies could not possibly sneak in upon us; if any came in sight, we should have plenty of time to pack up and make our es-

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cape. With flint and steel my mother made a fire with dry driftwood that my grandmother brought from the river slope, and then, opening one of our parfleches, she got out some dried buffalo meat and roasted it for us.

As soon as we finished eating, my mother ordered grandmother and me to lie down and sleep while she kept watch on the country. I made her promise to awake me in the middle of the afternoon, so that she could have some sleep, and so be fresh for the long night ride that we were to make. She did not keep her word; Sun was not far above the mountains when she called me. I sat up and scolded her, but she just laughed and was herself asleep before I finished. My grandmother slept on.

We had but one dog, a big, wolflike female that had lost her newborn pups a few nights back; she had gone away from camp to have them, and we thought it likely that while she was out from her hole hunting food, coyotes, or perhaps a lynx, had killed them. Now, as I sat there on the edge of the river-bank and watched all up and down the valley,

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I saw that Sinuski (Striped Face) as I called her, was very uneasy; she kept thrusting up her head and sniffing the west wind — blowing fairly strong — and now and then mournfully whining. That made me uneasy; suspicious that danger of some kind threatened us. But look as I would, I could see nothing alarming. Every part of the grassy bottom stretching away up to the far timber was in view, and there was no living thing upon it. Midway between me and the timber, however, there was a small, breast-high patch of rose-brush on the slope of the river-bank, and I decided that in it was whatever was making the dog so restless. “Sinus’ki!” I hissed to her. “Sinus’ki! What is it up there? Go take it!” I spatted my hands together and she was gone; never had I seen her run so fast; behind her rose a smoky trail of fine dust. I sprang up and fitted an arrow to my bow and called to the women; they came out of their sleep with a quick spring and we all ran to the horses; as we began untieing their picket ropes, we saw Sinuski leap into the rose-brush. No enemy sprang

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out from it; we heard no outcry; the brush quivered where the dog made her way into it. Ropes in hand, we just stood and stared; stared curiously; fear had left us. And then, soon, we saw the dog come out from the brush with something light-colored drooping from her mouth. It was something alive, we could see it wiggle; she came trotting toward us, head held high, and presently my mother cried out that it was a wolf pup that she brought. So it was. A fuzzy, gray-white wolf pup. Straight to me she came and dropped it sprawling at my feet, then rose up whining, placed her forepaws upon my shoulders and licked my face, and her eyes begged me to have pity for her find.

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“Yes, Sinuski! Yes. It shall be your wolf pup and mine,” I told her, and stooped and stroked the little one’s head and back. It didn’t try to flinch from me, nor bite. It feebly wagged its tail; it was very gaunt, as though it had had no milk for some days back. We wondered how its mother could have lost it. Sinuski lay down beside it and nuzzled

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it to her; it seized one of her swollen teats and drank thirstily with a loud sucking noise.

We repicketed the horses and the women lay down and were soon sleeping again. I took up the wolf pup and carried it to the river-bank, Sinuski close at my heels. There I gave it back to her, and after taking more milk it went to sleep at her side. Pleased I was that she had found it, for I had often wished for a young wolf for a pet. I considered a name for it, and, as it was a male, decided to call it Nipokana, or, for short, just Nipoka. Little did I think that day, as I sat there watching it in its heavy, full-fed sleep, that it was to be my great helper, protector of my life, in time to come.

Near sunset I aroused the women, and we ate more of our dried food, then packed up, and, crossing the river, and climbing the south slope, rode eastward along the ridge dividing the Two Medicine Lodges and Badger River valleys. Then we crossed the latter stream, and at midnight forded Birch Creek. There we rested for a time, and I got

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the wolf pup out of the sack in which I was carrying it, and let Sinuski nurse it.

Bear River begins where Cutbank River runs into the waters of Two Medicine Lodges, Badger, and Birch Creek Rivers. When daylight came, we were out on the plain straight south of the head of the river, and at sunrise we rode down into its valley at a place we called Apukwitsipeska: Wide Willow Flat. No game of any kind was in sight, and in all the trails in the bottom were numerous horse tracks and dog tracks, sure signs that a big camp of people was not far off. Of course they could be no other than the Pikuni. "Oh, we shall soon be with them, our very own people!" my mother said, half-laughing and half-crying, and in a voice all trembly she began to sing and I sang with her.

Twice we forded the river, and then came into a great bottom, the third one below Apukwitsipeska, and there, at its lower end, was the great camp of the Pikuni, hundreds and hundreds of lodges. The great herds of horses, thousands of head, had

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been driven in to water, those needed for the day had been caught, and the rest were now stringing their way out of the valley again to graze upon the plain. Far as the camp was from us, we could hear its droning, humming noise like a great swarm of bees, the talking, laughing, singing of men and women, shouting of children, barking of dogs, impatient neighing of tethered horses. How we hurried then, close-herding our pack-animals along to keep them from joining the outgoing herds. We passed into the great circle of the camp, people greeting us on all sides. Straight through it we went to its east side and the more than two hundred lodges of the Small Robes clan, our own clan. We passed the huge, double lodge of Lone Walker, chief of our clan and chief, too, of the tribe. He was a great man; the greatest warrior, the wisest, most kind-hearted chief of all those of the three tribes of us plains people.

And now women here and there began to cry out: "Here is Deer Woman, come back to us, and with her is Little Otter, her son!" None of them, how-

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ever, paid any attention to my grandmother, riding in our rear. They came crowding around us, all talking at once, as we drew up before the doorway of Heavy Runner's lodge, he who was my mother's elder brother — my uncle. His women came hurrying out and embraced us as we slid from our horses. We went inside and my mother ran across the lodge and knelt and threw her arms around my uncle and kissed him, and cried. He stroked her hair and said to her — and his voice was a little trembly: "There! There! Don't cry, sister. I am so glad that you have returned to us, you and Little Otter. How he has grown! This is a good day; let us be happy in it."

My mother soon dried her tears and sat leaning against him, and he said to me: "Yes! How you have grown, nephew mine! You are almost a man! No doubt you have begun to hunt — to keep your mother well supplied with meat and skins? And now you will soon be taking your sacred fast?"

"Oh, I am proud of him! He is a good hunter!" my mother cried.

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“I want to be a seizer of eagles,” I told him. “Those Kaina Sun priests — seizers of eagles — would not help me. Will you help me, uncle? I want to seize many of the far-blue flyers now, this very summer!”

My grandmother had come in and seated herself near the doorway: “Ha!” she snorted. “He is still crazy! Heavy Runner, I can do nothing with this boy; try you to put some sense in his head!”

My uncle laughed. “I like your talk,” he said to me. “It is good for the young to desire to do great things. In time to come, no doubt you will be a seizer of eagles. But now you have to endure your sacred fast. Then, having obtained your vision, you must go to war, many, many times. You must sit often with the Sun priests, listening to their wise talk, and you must yourself pray and make sacrifice to the gods. So doing, maybe by the time you have seen thirty or thirty-five winters, you can become a seizer of eagles.”

By the time he had finished speaking, my heart was just about dead. I had been so sure that my

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uncle would help me to do what I wanted to do at once, and now he, just as the Kaina men had done, declared that only in far-off summers to come could I become a seizer of eagles! I gave him no answer, but I said to myself: "All hopes and plans come to nothing; may as well give up all thought of becoming a seizer of eagles!" Yes, I felt very, very sad.

My mother and grandmother went out to unload the horses, and set up our little lodge. Some men came in to visit and smoke with my uncle, and I replied shortly to their requests for news of the Kaina. I did tell, however, about the war party from which we had so narrowly escaped, and before I had quite finished, my uncle and his guests were hurrying from the lodge and shouting to the Ikunuhkahtsi¹ to bring in their fast horses and sad-

¹ I-kun-uh-kah-tsi: All Friends. The society of warriors. It comprised twelve different bands: Little Birds, Pigeons, Mosquitoes, Braves, All Crazy Dogs, Raven Carriers, Dogs, Tails, Horns, Kit Foxes, Seizers, Bulls. Of these, the Little Birds was the band which the youths first joined. The Braves, comprising great warriors, was the greatest of the bands. The Bulls was the very old men's band.

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dle them, and go in search of the enemy. A great roar of excitement arose in the camp; men were everywhere calling to their young herders to run in the herds; women began loudly to call upon Sun to protect their loved ones in the coming fight; children cried and dogs howled. I went outside and watched the warriors assemble, and then, when Lone Bull, our war chief, gave the word, go charging westward out from camp, singing at the top of their voices our tribal song of battle. Dressed all of them in their war clothes and war bonnets, and with shields uncased, they were a heart-stirring sight as they rode away. Watching them, I for the time forgot my trouble. And then, when they had gone out of sight over the rim of the plain, it all came back; though Sun was shining in a clear sky, the day was black — all was black to me.

Our lodge was set up. I called Sinuski to follow me inside, took the wolf pup from its sack, and gave it to her to nurse. My mother came in with food that my aunts had given her, pemmican, dried

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service berries, a set of roasted hump ribs from a cow buffalo, and she put some of it all before me, but I could not eat. Some women came in and began to chatter; then some boys came to visit with me. I could n't talk with them. I took up the pup and went out, Sinuski at my heels, and climbed the valley slope and sat down on the rim of the plain. Sinuski whined for the pup. I let her have it, and lay down and slept.

The low growling of the dog awoke me, and opening my eyes I saw that the day was gone; Sun had just trailed down behind the mountains. I sat up; an old man was approaching me, climbing slowly up the slope. He paused and raised his head and I saw that he was Red Wings, my mother's uncle. He was a great Sun priest, owner of the sacred Thunder Pipe.

"Ha! Here you are!" he said, as he came on, and seated himself at my side. "Your mother said that I should find you here, and that you are very low-hearted. I come to lift your load of sadness."

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"Show me how I may become a seizer of eagles, right now in the moons of this summer, and the load will be lifted," I shortly — and no doubt crossly — answered.

"Now, now, my son, be calm, think gently, speak gently; the gods know your thoughts, hear your words. Always bear that in mind," he said.

"They all say, the Kaina Sun priests, and my uncle, down there in camp, that many, many more summers must pass, and that I must myself become a Sun priest, before I even think about seizing eagles."

He did not answer that at once, and I said to myself that I would get no help from him. I turned my back to him and watched the pup, heavy with the milk it had taken, sprawling all over Sinuski and playfully biting her, and I wished that I was as happy as he.

Then the old man began to speak, at first more to himself than to me: "As I see it, the doing of sacred things need not depend upon one's age; it is only that the young are not of serious mind.

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Youths give but little thought to the gods; all that they think about, all that they care for is a good time; dancing; in fine clothes strutting around where the girls can see them; gambling; trapping, not for furs to wear, but wherewith to buy from the traders mirrors to hang from their wrists; bright paints for their faces; fancy cloths for shirts. Now, if a youth would abstain from all this — if he would from the very beginning be of thoughtful mind, seek constantly knowledge of the gods and pray for their help —”

He ceased speaking, stared absently at the ground, and after a long wait I cried out: “You mean, then —”

“I mean this,” he broke in, with a loud spat of his hands: “Young though you are, it is possible that you may soon become a seizer of eagles if you will follow the trail that I mark out.”

“Never once shall I step out of it!” I agreed.

“Good! You must, then, at once endure your sacred fast,” he said.

“And after I have done that, what next?”

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"I shall not tell you now. It is best that you think of but one thing at a time," he answered.

I took up the pup, and we started down the slope, I so encouraged, so happy that it was hard for me to keep at the old man's side. I wanted to sing; to dance my way home to my mother and tell her what Red Wings was to do for me.

When we entered the great circle of the lodges, the camp crier was making the round of them, pausing often to shout: "Listen! Listen, all you people, thus say your chiefs: 'To-morrow morning camp is to be broken. We shall move up Two Medicine Lodges River to the mountains, where all who need new lodge-poles may cut them.'"

This first moon of summer, the New Grass moon, was also called, in that long ago time, New Lodges moon, for it was at this season that the women, after tanning many cow buffalo hides — making soft, white leather of them — now cut them to proper shape and sewed them together, making new lodge-skins, and, of course, new lodge-poles were required for them.

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Said Red Wings to me, as we parted in front of his lodge: "This does please me, my son! The Two Medicine Lodges mountains are very Sun favored! I would rather you endure your fast there than in any other place in all our great country!"

CHAPTER III

I HAD thought the Kaina a rich and powerful tribe, but when, the next morning, I saw the Pikuni strung out upon the trail to the west, I learned that the Kaina were nothing compared to these my mother's and my very own people. I saw that the Pikuni was by far the largest of the Black-feet tribes; that the men and women and children were all of them beautifully clothed; that their horse herds were as numerous as the grass of the plains, and that the animals in use carried all of them fine pack-saddles and riding-saddles with cruppers, breechings, and saddle-cloths all glittering with quill-work and bead-work of fine patterns, and colors of Old Man's Lariat itself! I saw, too, that the men were better armed than those of the Kaina, and more alert; they rode their powerful, prancing horses with perfect ease, and with eager eyes kept watch upon the country, hoping always to discover a party of our enemies. At the head of the great caravan was our own clan,

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the Small Robes, almost a tribe itself, and well in the lead of it rode Lone Walker with his underchiefs and several Sun priests. I said to myself that some day, not far off, I myself would be riding with them.

Late in the afternoon of the second day out from Bear River, we made camp right in the mountains, at the foot of the lower one of the lakes of Two Medicine Lodges River. By the time night came, the women had the lodges up, wood and water at hand, and were cooking over their little fires. My mother was about to set food before me when Red Wings sent for me to feast with him, and I went to his lodge, a fine one of twenty-four skins, so more than large enough for himself, his four women, and a widowed daughter and her children. All around, inside, the lodge was lined with a band of beautifully painted leather, fastened to the poles and extending well above one's head when standing. In the spaces between the couches were piled numbers of shiny parfleches, painted with red and blue and green and yellow designs, and filled with the

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dried meats and pemmican, and clothing and various belongings of the family. With the setting of Sun, the old man's sits-beside-him wife had brought in his Thunder Pipe, from the tripod behind the lodge to which it was fastened during the day, and it was now, in its many wrappings, tied to the lodge-poles just over his head, along with the several ancient, painted and fringed raw-hide pouches containing his sacred paints, perfumes, and other things used in the ceremony of the pipe. I had never seen the pipe, but had heard of its wonderful power, and now, as I took my seat upon the couch at the old man's left, I looked up at the roll with great respect and silently prayed: "Hai-yu! Ancient Thunder Pipe! Pity poor me!"

"Well, here we are in this place favored by Sun! My boy, are you still minded to do in all things as I advise?" the old man said to me.

"Yes! Yes! No matter how hard your trail, I shall follow it," I answered.

And as he nodded his head in approval, the women clapped their hands, and one said to the

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others: "Sisters, we are going to be proud of our young Kaina relative!"

That hurt me, and I cried out: "Am I not just as much Pikuni as I am Kaina?"

"Yes! And more! And before long you shall forget the Kaina and be wholly one of us!" Red Wings soothed me.

"A promise to my grandmother is that I will return to the Kaina to ask them to give me the one great name that I want," I told him.

"Well, you can keep that promise, and still be one of us. Having received the name, you can return to us and take your rightful place in this, our Small Robes clan," he said. And added: "Tell me, now, what name is it that you want?"

It is not proper for one to mention his own name, nor a name that one desires, so I answered: "The name is that of a great Kaina Sun priest, an old man who died last summer, who in his time was the greatest of all the Kaina seizers of eagles."

"Ha! You mean Old Sun!" he cried.

"Yes, that is the name I want to carry," I said.

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“Keep you the trail that I mark out, and it shall be yours!” he all but roared.

And just then some visitors entered, and we were all given large dishes of food.

There was much joking and laughing during the feast, for all of which I had no heart; through it all my mind was wholly upon the great tasks that I knew I must endure. I prayed Sun to give me strength for them. After all had finished eating, Red Wings lit his great pipe and it went from hand to hand of the guests. Three pipefuls must be smoked before the old man could dismiss the visitors and give me his instructions, and I wished that all three could be smoked at one round. Then, just as, at last, the third pipe was about smoked out, into camp charged Lone Bull and his warriors, shouting at the top of their voices the victory song, and the people all hurried from their lodges to greet them. As we passed out, following the guests, Red Wings hurriedly said to me: “Take my gun and whichever of my horses you want and tomorrow kill plenty of meat for your lodge, for on

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the following day you begin upon the trail to that you desire."

Heavy though my thoughts were, I could not help joining in the greeting to our warriors. What excitement there was in the great camp circle! Women were everywhere shouting the names of their loved ones, praising their bravery, giving thanks to Sun for their safe return, and vowing, some of them, that, because he had protected them and brought them alive out of battle, they would build a great lodge for him in the coming Berries Ripe moon. And while the women shouted their praises, and sang, we crowded around the warriors, and after a time learned from them that they had come upon the Assiniboines on the open plain north of Cutbank River, and, chasing them as they would a band of buffalo, killed them all, themselves receiving not even the slightest wound! It was far into the night when the excitement over the victory ended and we took to our couches and slept.

Sun was not high, the next morning, when my mother, grandmother, and I rode out from camp,

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I on one of Red Wings' fast buffalo horses, his flintlock gun in hand, and my bow and arrows upon my back. I had never fired a gun, and that was the first one I had ever carried. I felt so very proud of it that I led the way slowly, and made a snake-like course through camp so that many people would see me and think me a great hunter. The many of them gave me but a passing glance; the few who paused and called out, "Ha! Here goes Little Otter with a gun! Real hunter he is!" — these so pleased me that I just felt myself swell out with pride. I sat my horse as straight and stiff as a lodge-pole, digging a heel into his flank to make him prance, and pretending to be very busy holding him in check.

I led my women down the valley quite a long way, then across the river and north up onto the plain, here in the foothills so broken that we could see but a little way in any direction. To the west, near the edge of the pine timber, we discovered three real bears, very busy digging for roots and turning over rocks in search of mice and ants. My

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mother agreed with me that we were not out for bears. We saw a few deer; a band of antelope; several elk; and then, when well out from the river, discovered that we sought, a herd of buffalo. All of the animals were headed from us, feeding slowly up a ridge in the plain, and we remained right where we were until the last of them had disappeared over the crest of the rise. We then went on, and when we were almost to the top of the ridge I let my horse go. He had seen the buffalo, was now scenting them, and was as eager to get in among them as I. Over the top we went, and down after the buffalo, not much more than a long bowshot away. We were almost upon them before they took alarm and started off in a wild rush down the hill, crowding in close together with a thunder of hooves, their short, tufted tails crooked stiffly above their rumps.

I looked for one of them that was fat, chose a two-year bull, and guided my horse close up beside him, leaned out, poked my gun almost into his ribs, and fired. The ball pierced his lungs and a

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red stream of blood spurted from his nostrils; he was done for. I paid no more attention to him and began to reload my gun. A hundred times I had heard how the hunters did that in the chase. In my mouth I held three balls. Holding the gun in the crook of my left arm, I poured some powder from the horn into the palm of my hand, tried to pour it into the barrel of the gun, and spilled it all! In that way I lost two more charges. That would not do; powder was too valuable to be scattered over the plain. I checked up the horse, dropped the gun into a bunch of sagebrush, and then let him go as I got out my bow and several arrows and fitted one of them to the bow cord. The horse needed no urging; all that I had to do was to guide him toward the animal I wanted, and once he knew which one I selected, he did the rest.

This time I chose a big cow, so round of body and fat that she was running well behind the leaner animals. She dodged just as I was about to slip an arrow into her, whirling sharply around upon the back trail, and even as she whirled, so did my horse,

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his ears laid back, his teeth exposed; mad he was and eager that the cow should not escape us. At his sudden turn I nearly went off him, only saving myself by a quick grasp of his mane. How he did run then, quickly carrying me close up behind the cow, then up along her right side until I at last got an arrow into her just back of the ribs, the shaft ranging forward into the heart. She made a high, sideways jump as it struck in, then several lesser leaps, and with the third leap thudded to the ground, dead as she struck it! The horse carried me well beyond her before he could slow up and turn back, and as I slid off him beside the carcass, I said to myself: "Though I scattered powder over the grass, I surely can use bow and arrow!" And took some comfort in that. I was very much ashamed at the way I had fumbled my handling of the gun.

My mother had seen me drop the gun, and now, with my grandmother close behind, she came riding up and handed it to me. "You should n't have been so careless as to let it slip out of your

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hands, your great-uncle's gun that he thinks so much of. What would we have done, how could we ever have repaid him if you had broken it!" she told me.

"It would serve Red Wings right if it were broken; he was foolish to loan it to a careless boy!" my grandmother exclaimed.

I made them no answer; rather than tell them that I had been so awkward with the gun, I preferred that they think as they did. I helped them turn the big cow into position for skinning and butchering, and then, while they worked, I mounted my horse and rode up a near, bare butte, to keep a lookout for a chance war party of the enemy. In the very top of the butte I found an old pit of a seizer of eagles and got down from my horse and examined it, clearing out the slender willow sticks and rotted grass in the bottom, with which it had once been covered, and under the rubbish finding a human skull. When I saw that, I was up out of the pit with one quick spring. Skulls of men were things not to be touched; the shadows of the dead

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were known sometimes to hover around the remains in order to strike some kind of killing sickness into any one who desecrated them.

I sat down near the edge of the pit and stared at the skull, tried to understand why it was there. It could n't be the skull of the seizer of eagles who had dug the pit; if it were, then all his other bones should be there with it. But try as I would, I could find no explanation of this and fell to studying the pit itself. Longer than a man it was, quite narrow, and about shoulder-deep. Around it was no sign of the earth that had been taken from it; all of that had been carried to a distance and scattered to the winds. I pictured the seizer of eagles, his pit completed, carefully covering it with the light sticks, grass on top of them, and then upon the light roof laying his stuffed wolf skin, with fresh liver protruding from a slit in its side. That done, he had slid into the pit, covering over the place of his entrance, and, lying down, awaited the coming of an eagle. But here all became dark to me. What sacred mysteries had the seizer performed, what

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prayers made, to bring the eagles to him and seize them without injury to himself? At thought of that my heart went dead; it did not seem possible for me to learn those mysteries; anyhow not for many, many winters to come.

And then, after a time, I recalled kind old Red Wings' encouraging words and began to feel better: "Yes! Young though I am, I shall soon be seizing the far-blue flyers!" I said.

I looked down upon my women; they had finished butchering the cow and were going to the carcass of the young bull. Then, from the direction of camp, I saw a large number of riders approaching, hunters in quest of meat and followed by their women. They passed on under the butte, a few pausing to speak with my mother, and from her one of them turned and rode up to me. Long Wolf he was, a youth of the Never Laugh clan, no more than one or two winters my elder.

"Ha! Little Otter, what do you here?" he asked.

"Looking at this," I answered, pointing to the pit. "The one thing that I want to do is to become

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a seizer of eagles — not in far-off winters to come, but now, right now in this time of my youth,” I told him, as I had before told others.

“Well, and why not do that?”

“You speak as if seizing eagles were no more than killing buffalo,” I answered.

“Nor is it! My brother-in-law says that all this fasting and praying and performing of mysteries is foolish craziness; that any one can go out and seize eagles.”

“Who may he be — this wonderful brother-in-law?”

“You need n’t speak that way! He is wonderful; more wise than all of our Sun priests! He is a white man; one of those Long Knives traders over on Big River. Just to show you that his words are true, that I believe him, I shall repair this pit and right here seize eagles!”

“Come closer; look down in it,” I told him, pointing to the skull.

“Ha! And what of that?” he laughed, when he saw it. “My brother-in-law says that dead men’s

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bones are no more than bones of buffalo and other animals. He says that men's shadows do not remain with their bones. I believe him. I am not afraid of that skull; when I repair this pit and lie down in it to await the coming of eagles, I shall use the skull for a pillow! But you were here first; perhaps you want to use the pit?"

"No, I do not want it," I angrily answered. "I am not forsaking the teachings of our fathers! Use you this pit and learn that, while the white men are smart in some ways—able to make guns, powder, many things impossible for us to make—still, they have not the wisdom that our fathers have gathered since Old Man made the world and placed our people here, and have handed down to us. Follow you the white men's trail, then; I shall keep to the trail marked out for me by our wise ones! Yes! Follow that trail of the white skins, and soon you will be crying out to Sun for help!"

"Who cares for the bird's head!" he cried. "I shall be rich with eagle tails before this moon ends, and you—why, you will be working your

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way painfully to them for how long a time to come!" And away he rode to overtake the hunters, now far out in the breaks of the foothills.

Bravely though I had argued with this Long Wolf, now that he had left me I felt very low-hearted; as I rode down the butte to rejoin my women, I fought hard the thought that he might possibly be right; that his quick and easy trail, not my hard and long one, was the one I should follow. I had nothing to say to the women. I helped them load the horses with all the meat of the fat cow, and some of the young bull meat, and led the way back to camp. There, as soon as I had watered the animals, and driven them out to graze, I hurried into Red Wings' lodge to return his gun, and tell him about my talk with the young unbeliever.

"Yes, I know," he said, when I had done. "All of last summer Long Wolf lived with his sister over there in the Long Knives' fort on Big River, and ever since his return to us he has done nothing but praise the white men and their ways, and

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make jokes about our beliefs. Often and long have we tried to show him the truth, but he will not listen to our words. His time soon comes! Maybe he has put some doubts into your heart; if so, cast them out at once! Listen! See this yourself: True it is that white men are very cunning, able to make many things of great use to us. But there their smartness ends. When not trading for our robes and furs, what do they? — nothing but eat heavily; joke with one another; dance crazy dances with the girls of our tribe whom they marry. We learn from this Long Wolf's sister that, long though she has been married to her white man, she has never known him nor any of his kind to pray, nor even talk about the gods, and that other life that sooner or later we must all enter.

“In their ignorance they laugh at our way of life. They are to be pitied! They have never fasted, made sacrifices to the gods, prayed for revealing visions, so of course they have not knowledge. When they go out upon the plains, and into the great mountains, do they learn from the

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different animals, the birds of the air, the water creatures, the trees and plants, the hundreds of things that we learn from them? No! To all that they are deaf, and blind!”

His talk ended, the old man seemed to forget me; with hands clasped and supporting his chin, he stared absently at the ground in front of him, muttering to himself. And presently I cried out: “That Long Wolf, he did me harm! He gave me doubting thoughts! I have cast them out, never again shall I entertain them!”

“Ha! Spoken like the true Pikunikwan that you are. I was just praying for you to feel that way about it,” he said. “And now, listen; this day being well gone, to-morrow morning I shall unroll my Thunder Pipe for you, and when the ceremony is ended, you will take my gun, a robe, but no food, and go up on the side of the big, red mountain that slopes down into the upper lake, and there, finding a place of shelter from storm and wind, you are to fast, and pray for a vision, for some sacred one to become your lifelong guide and

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shield from danger. Now you may return to your lodge."

I went home happy, eager for the experience I was to have, all by myself upon that high, steep mountain. I talked with my mother about it, and, for once, my grandmother spoke kindly to me, gave me much encouragement in my undertaking.

On the following day, when Sun was about half-way up to the middle, I was called to Red Wings' lodge, and given a seat upon his couch, at his right. On his left, a little space between them, was his sits-beside-him wife, herself a sacred woman, bearer and keeper of his Thunder Pipe. Upon the couches between her and the doorway sat a number of men who had come to assist in the pipe ceremony, several of them bringing drums with which to keep time to the songs that all were to sing. Upon my right, from me to the doorway, were Red Wings' younger wives and a number of other women, who were also to join in the singing.

In this one lodge of the great camp was now no talking, no smoking. All present were very solemn-

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faced; they kept their eyes upon the little fire; their thoughts were of the sacred pipe, favored of Sun, that was about to be unwrapped. Presently all eyes were turned upon Red Wings, with his red-painted willow tongs drawing several red coals from the fire and placing them in a little heap upon the ground between him and his head woman, and close in front of the couch upon which they sat. Then, from one of his sacred pouches, he took a small braid of sweetgrass and laid it upon the coals. Sweet-odored smoke arose from its burning, and he and his woman held their hands over it; grasped handfuls of it and rubbed their faces; smoothed it upon their hair and clothing, so purifying themselves before touching the powerful Sun pipe. That done, the woman arose, took down the roll of the pipe from its fastenings above the couch, and carefully laid it between her man and herself, and untied the four leather strings that bound it. Then again the man put sweetgrass upon the coals, and both he and the woman smoothed the roll with handfuls of the smoke, at the same time beginning

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the first one of the four unwrapping songs, the song of Ancient Buffalo, in which all the singers joined.

My heart sinks! Gone are those singers of that long ago morning; long since have their shadows departed to the Sand Hills, and with the remains of Painted Wings the sacred pipe itself lies buried! And those who have come after them, what are they? Pikuni only in name! Oh, well for those of that long ago time that they died when they did! They did not, like me, live to see the white men exterminate our game, fence up our great country, starve us, take our children from us and teach them their language, their ways of life, tell them that our beliefs are all lies, that Sun himself is nothing but a ball of fire, kept moving across the sky by one whom they call World-Maker!

And what is the result of all this? It is that our children, forsaking our religion and laughing at that of their white teachers as even greater lies, believe nothing! And having not our ancient beliefs, living not as, in the very beginning, Sun commanded us to live, they have become cruel-hearted.

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Some of them tell lies; they steal; they cheat not only the white men, but one another as well! And, having not the strength nor the knowledge to follow the white men's trail, they starve, they sicken and die! It is good that they die; there is not now any place on this earth for the Pikuni! Bad as they have become, it is my hope, my constant prayer that their shadows be permitted to join those of their fathers in the Sand Hills, and that we all soon thither go! Dreary that place is, that shadow land, but at that it is better than staggering along the trail that the whites have here marked out for us! But, enough! Let me go back to those days of my youth! Let me for the time forget all this in telling you of the happy, rich, clean life of the long ago Pikuni!

How low, sad, deep, and heart-stirring was that Ancient Buffalo song! It ended, and the woman laid open the outer one of the four wrappings of the pipe. Came next the Antelope Song, faster of time and in higher tone, and the second wrap was spread out. Followed the Wolf Song, and, last, the song of

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Thunder Bird, and as it ended and the last wrapping was opened, exposing the beautifully feathered and fur-tufted pipestem, we all — men and women — gave the loud, long, quavering shout of victory. How that stirred our hearts! How beautifully it sounded, that mingling of the high, clear voices of the women with the deep, full tones of the men!

The Sun priest had already prepared a small dish of sacred paint; not the bright red paint of the white men, but the reddish brown powdery soft rock that Old Man, in making the world, had placed here and there in cutbanks for our use, and which Sun loved above all other colors. As he lifted the dish, I moved closer to him, and he painted my hair, my face, my hands with the sacred color, and then setting the dish aside and grasping his wrap with each hand to make it like the wings of a bird, Thunder Bird, he fanned me, at the same time praying Sun, all Above People, all creatures of the air, the earth, and the water, to pity me, protect me from all dangers, and particularly to give me success in the lone, long fast



HE PAINTED MY HAIR, MY FACE, MY HANDS WITH THE
SACRED COLOR

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that I was about to endure. That done, he lifted the wonderful pipestem, the singers began the Thunder Bird dance song, and, holding the stem upraised, he danced before me, around the fire and before me again, and resumed his seat upon the couch: "There! I have done for you all that I can, you may go!" he told me.

My eyes were so full of tears that I could barely see the gun, powder-horn, and ball-pouch that one of his women held out to me. I took them and went out, passing several women and men that were waiting to enter and be prayed for. Passed also Long Wolf, who called out to me: "So, you go to fast! Me, I go to kill a wolf for bait for eagles!"

I entered our poor little lodge and went to my couch. My mother placed food before me, sat down and hugged me to her and began to cry. "This may be the last meal that I shall ever give you! Oh, how I dread your going away up there by yourself to fast! What terrible dangers you may have to face, dangers that you will not be able to survive!" she said.

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“Cease your whimpering!” my grandmother shouted to her. “On this day your son is no longer a boy to be petted and cried over. This day he becomes a man, so encourage him to go forth and face all dangers, and bravely die if he fails to overcome them!”

“Were he your son you would n’t be so hard-hearted!” said my mother.

“I had a son! I never petted him, I made a brave man of him! As you became his woman, you well know that!” the old woman cried.

I could not bear her crossness, well meant though I knew it was. I had no desire to eat. I took up a large, well-furred robe, my gun, and said that I would go. My mother followed me out beyond the edge of camp, hugged and kissed me, sat down and covered her head with her wrap and cried. I crossed the river and turned into the big game trail running up the valley. None of our hunters had followed it, this season, and, now that I was to fast upon the red mountain, until my time of trial ended, none would follow it beyond the foot

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of the upper lake. I found that the trail was hard-packed by the different kinds of hooved animals, and the bears, wolves, and other prowlers of the night that were constantly using it. I prayed that the bears would not attack me.

I passed the lower lake, went on up the narrowed valley, and climbed the rock ledge from which leaps, from a dark cave in it, the falls of our virgin warrior woman, Running Eagle. But first I turned out of the trail to look at that dreadful river cave where, fearing not the terrible Under-Water People, that young woman had endured her fast. And looking at it, with the roar of the falls in my ears, I said to myself: "She, just a girl, fasted, obtained her vision in the black night of that hole. Shall I, then, fear the nights that I must pass upon the open mountainside? No! Take courage!"

With quicker step and lighter heart I climbed to the top of the ledge and struck off through heavy timber to the east end of the red mountain. Deer, elk, several moose fled before me. Passing out from the timber, I went quartering westward up

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the open, grassy steeps and rock ledges, noting that numbers of bighorn and white goats were grazing and resting here and there, the nearer bands of bighorn making for the heights at sight of me, the white goats paying hardly any attention to my passing. When, at Sun's going down, I was straight above the center of the upper lake, and about halfway to the top of the great mountain, I came upon the very place for my fast. Here a red rock ledge rose straight up to more than the height of a tall pine, and in it, its floor at about the height of my waist, was a small cave where I should be sheltered from wind and rain. Below the ledge at a distance of thirty or forty steps, a small spring of water ran from a crack in a bare rock slope. I went to the spring and drank, then climbed up to the cave, spread my robe in it, and lay down. It was but little more than the length of me, and, reaching in, I could touch its back wall; the out-thrust of its roof was my storm shield.

I lay facing the valley. The tops of the mountains across were still Sun-painted, but the red was

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fast fading. Down under me the lake had turned black. I could see white, widening streaks in it made by ducks, or maybe beavers, but not the swimmers themselves. I dreaded the coming of the night; it came; I could see but dimly the white trickle of the spring, no farther. This was the first night in my life that I was to pass alone. Away off there in camp my mother, my cross old grandmother, and Red Wings were praying for me, I knew. I began a prayer to Sun, to all the gods to preserve me from all dangers, and to give me a good vision. And then I stopped short; my skin turned rough; I shivered. Up through the black darkness there came to me so dreadful, so heart-sickening a cry that it did not seem possible any living creature of this world, man, or animal of four feet, could have made it!

CHAPTER IV

HOLDING my breath and tightly gripping my gun, I sat up and listened, open-mouthed, for that awful cry to be repeated; dreaded hearing it again, yet felt that I must hear it, for I then might learn what it was that had come into my fasting-place to — doubtless — do me harm. But the cry did not come. Listen as I would, I could hear no footsteps. The spring lay in a narrow, grass-and-brush-grown shallow coulee running from my cliff down the mountain to the next cliff, more than a long bowshot from me, and each bank of the coulee was loose, coarse slide rock — droppings from the cliff — that would tinkle and crunch under the footsteps of any living thing except, perhaps, the fuzzy feet of a rabbit. Nothing had crossed the banks since I came to the cliff cave; of that I was sure. That is, nothing of bone and flesh and beating heart. Did the shadows of people have voices? I questioned, and thought over all that I had heard

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about them. No, shadows were always silent, and invisible to the eyes of living people. Dogs alone had the power to see them; they often banded together, their hair bristling forward, and rushed out from our lodges to drive a silent-moving, sneaking shadow away, shadow of some enemy that our warriors had killed. "It is a living man, or prowling meat-eater that I have to watch for," I said, and felt not quite so much afraid; it were better to have an enemy that I could see, than one invisible.

After a time the darkness lightened; Night Light was coming up. She rose above the sharp, black peaks of the mountains across the valley, showing almost the whole of herself, and making the steep slope below me plain to my eyes. I could see the water of the little spring glitter; every patch of brush in the shallow coulee stood out distinct in her light. For a long way east and west, outstanding cliffs and ridges of the mountain-side were in plain view; down in the bottom of the valley the lake was no longer black; its still surface had the shine of a white man's looking-glass. Look where I would, I

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could see no living, moving thing, but that awful cry was ever in my ears. I was tired, sleepy, but dared not lie down or even close my eyes. I gathered my robe more closely about me and sat on watch all through the long night; it passed quietly enough.

When day came, at last, I went down to the spring and, though not thirsty, drank all the water I could hold; men fasters, seekers of sacred visions, and women who for four days and nights fasted while they built a great lodge for Sun, were not permitted to drink during the time he was following his trail across the blue. I drank that I might not become painfully thirsty during the day, and hurried back into my cave. I was now very hungry, but put the thought of food from me, and prayed Sun to keep me safe from all danger, and give me soon a good vision.

Just before Sun came up, some white grouse flew down to the spring and drank, and before they scattered out to feed, I prayed them to help me, to give me a good dream. They were losing their

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winter whiteness; already some of their yellow feathers of summer had grown out. A lone old wolf, his winter coat all faded and ragged, frightened them away as he came to the spring and drank. I was lying upon my robe, and the little wind there was blew up the mountain; he did not notice me, or, seeing, thought that I was a part of the cliff rock. Silently I prayed him for help. After he had gone, band after band of bighorns and white goats came to drink, the males always separate from the females and their young. I prayed to them all, often biting my lips to keep from laughing at the young as they chased one another, leaped over the backs of their mothers, and head against head playfully fought. They were all very small, some of them no doubt but a few days old, but they were just as sure-footed as their elders, and much more active.

Seven of the early morning drinkers, seven bighorn mothers and their young, were last to straggle away from the spring, and of these, one mother with twins left the coulee well behind her sisters. At a little distance out to the west of me, she came

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to a stand on a slope of rough slide rocks of all shapes, none of them as large as my head, and then turned around and looked at her young, several times stamping one and the other of her forefeet. I wondered why she did that. I looked quickly all around, thinking that she had discovered an approaching enemy. Not a prowler was in sight, and I turned to her again just in time to see the twins, some little distance apart, drop to their knees and then lie down among the rocks, lower their heads, and then I could see them no more than if they had sunk right into the mountain-side. I understood; she had ordered them to lie down and sleep. They were of the color of the rocks; without doubt they gave off no odor of their kind; a wolf or other enemy, even I might go close by their resting-place, and never know that they were there. The mother looked at one and the other of them several times, and turned, crossed the slide, and slowly grazed down the grass and short-brush slope to the other old ones. I saw that their young had also disappeared. Sun climbed up and up in the blue, the

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day became warm. Six of the mothers lay down, rechewing what they had grazed of grass and tender growth of brush, and some soon fell asleep. The seventh one stood on watch.

I was now becoming very sleepy, and knew that I should sleep; that was why I was there; in sleep, the gods helping me, my shadow would go out from my body on far wanderings, and meet some creature who perhaps would become my life-long, powerful helper. But still that awful cry of the night was in my ears. I could not forget it, I kept watch for the crier, dared not close eyes. Was I a coward? How many youths of my number of winters, there in my place, alone, as I was, would have had more courage?

Now that Sun had climbed high up in the blue, the outhanging roof of my cave prevented my seeing him. While I now and then looked at every part of the mountain-side that was in view from where I lay, I kept close watch on the bighorn mothers. The one of them that remained standing, turning frequently to stare at all parts of the

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big slope, was also standing watch for me; so long as she remained quiet, I could be sure that there was no enemy sneaking upon me. It must have been about the middle of the day when, from her position above the others, she slowly walked to them and lay down, and at that, the one nearest her got up, humped her back, stretched herself, yawned, and started slowly up the slope to take her turn on guard. She suddenly stopped and jerked her head in my direction, and I saw that one of her young had left its resting-place and was running swiftly toward her. With a quick, long leap she started to meet it and all the other old ones sprang from their beds.

Then I heard a loud, ripping noise that seemed to come from above, and no sooner had it come to my ears, than with stiff set wings, down came a great eagle from the blue and seized the running young one! Deep into its back it set its sharp claws, and with quick flappings of wings started to rise with it. The mother had come close; with a last, high spring she tried to strike the seizer with

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her forefeet — and just missed the bird! Faster and faster it rose, flying outward from the slope. All the other mothers were coming running toward the hiding-places of their young. I heard the little one in the eagle's claws pitifully, faintly bleat, saw it wildly jerking its head, beating the air with its slender, useless legs. The eagle was now flying straight away from the mountain, and when well out beyond the cliff below me, it suddenly let the little one drop, hovered on back-beating wings, and then dived down after it. Listening intently, I heard the faint, far-down crash of the little body upon the rocks; it came to me that the eagle had purposely dropped it, not only to kill it, but to make its torn and bleeding body easy picking for its young ones, hungrily waiting for food in their nest in some near cliff. As soon as the eagle dived from my sight, I turned to look at the bighorns; with their young close to their sides they were running west; they disappeared over the top of a rocky point, heading up the mountain, and I saw them no more.

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I had been very angry at the eagle when it seized the young bighorn, but now, thinking it over, I knew that I was very wrong to feel so. Were I to blame the eagle for what he did, I must take blame for what I was trying to do! We both were doing only what Old Man had made us to do; eagles to kill young bighorns, goats, rabbits, birds, and men to kill all animals for food, clothing, and adornments! And so thinking, I fell asleep.

Sun had set when I awoke. I came to myself with a sudden start and sat up and stared down the slope. Not an animal was anywhere in sight. I had slept heavily; no vision had been mine. I was terribly disappointed; wondered how long I must remain there in the cave in order that my shadow go out upon discovery and find the help I sought. I rubbed my eyes, looked all along the slope again, and in the dusk hurried down to the spring and drank, and ran as fast as I could go back to the cave; that was not very fast; I was becoming weak-legged from need of food.

There had been a light west wind all day. It

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now died out. The night became very dark. From far up the valley, and across it, came the voices of the waterfalls upon the steep mountain-sides. I thought of what I had heard my father say about them, and felt very sad. His words were: "They talk to one another, those falling streams, but we cannot know what they say; only the gods know their language. They have been talking ever since Old Man made the world, and will go on talking forever. We men are born, our voices are heard for a little time, and then — no more of them!"

Never once had I heard his voice in anger, not even when he was handling a mean horse. His name had been Morning Eagle, but people seldom called him that; they called him Gentle. That was their name for him; men, women, children, to all he was the Gentle One. The Generous One! Gentle though he was at home, our warriors said that he had been fierce enough, bravest of the brave in battle with our enemies. Thinking now of him, there in the darkness and loneliness of that mountain-side, I for the first time questioned my inten-

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tions. I had thought, I had said that I wanted to be simply a seizer of eagles; but was that enough — should I not also become, following my father's trail, a terror to our enemies?

A loud splashing in the spring startled me. I was lying down, my robe folded over me, and came very near throwing it off and sitting up; instead, I said to myself: "Take courage! Lie still! You must lie still!" Ha! But it was hard to do that; I was just aching to be up and going from that place and going fast!

With the noise of the splashing in the spring, I now heard loud snuffling and snorting, and at the same time a little upward puff of wind brought to me the bad odor of bear. With the very first splash of water I had thought it likely a bear was taking a bath, and now I knew it. Were it a black bear, all was well with me; but if the bather chanced to be a real bear, then was I in great danger. Silently I called upon Sun to help me, and prayed, too, to Ancient Bear to turn this, one of his children, from my resting-place. I had never had anything to do

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with real bears, but knew all about them. Never a summer passed but several of our people were killed or crippled by them. They were the most uncertain of animals; at sight of man some would run away; others just go on with whatever they were doing; and still others, the few, would come straight at the person and kill, or so terribly bite and claw him that he might as well be dead.

By the noise he made, I knew that the bear was rolling over and over in the spring. The splashings ceased, and water dripped from him in many little streams. There was the sound like that of far-off, faint thunder; he was shaking himself, and such a rumbling as there was could come only from a furry hide as big as that of a buffalo cow; the bather was a real bear! Again I prayed for help. Soon I heard the faint swish, swish of brush as he passed through it, and then the crunch and tinkle of slide rock under his heavy weight. I could even hear the rattle of the long claws of his forefeet! He was coming up the slope, straight up toward me! Ha! Was n't fear then in me and breaking out in sweat

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all over my body! I knew that it was useless to get up and run; in two jumps he would have me! There was just one thing for me to do: shoot at him when he began to raise himself to enter my cave; thrust the muzzle of my gun right against him and pull trigger! If the ball failed to strike him dead, and probably it would fail to do that, there was the chance that the flash of fire and the loud *boom!* of the gun would frighten him away, wounded though he was. But how small was that chance!

It may be that, had I lain perfectly still, he would have turned and gone east or west along the slide rock at the foot of the cliff; but as he came on and I felt that he was heading straight for the cave, I had to change my position in order quickly to face him. I was lying right at the edge of the cave floor, and slowly as possible rolled away from it with the intention to sit up and hold my gun ready to fire. He gave a loud snort and came on faster when I moved, and I knew that he had seen me. He made three crashing jumps up the slide to the foot of the cliff, and then, dark as it was, I

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could see the still more black outline of him rising above the cave floor. I bent forward, poked the muzzle of my gun into soft, giving furry hide and flesh and fired, and by the blinding flash of the powder I saw that he was a bear of huge body! As the ball struck into him he let out a snorting roar that struck me right in the face, hot bad breath and wetness that was sickening, and with his roar he lunged farther into the cave, his nose striking my breast. I flinched back against the cave wall, crying to Sun to protect me from him, and as I did so he roared again, lost his foothold on the cliff wall and the great forepart of him began slipping backward. He clawed and clawed at the cave floor, and at the wall below with his hind feet, trying to recover his hold and come back at me, but his strength was going. Again and again he roared, and panted, and champed his jaws, and suddenly with a last scraping of claws was gone! I heard him thud upon the slide rock; heard the grind and rattle of it as he rolled down the steep slope, and then all was still.

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I had killed him! With one shot from my gun I had killed the largest bear that I had ever seen! I could count a *coup* upon him. Not so great a *coup* as though I had killed a Sioux or Crow or other of our enemies, but still a *coup*. I saw myself standing in front of the great Sun lodge that our women would build, there facing the people and crying out: "In the New Grass moon of this summer, I sought a vision in a little cave in the red rock mountain on the west side of upper Two Medicine Lodges Lake. There, in the darkness of night, a huge real bear tried to enter and seize me. I poked my gun against his breast, fired, and killed him. Proof of this is the claw necklace that you see I am wearing!" And then, when I finished, how the people would shout my name in praise! How pleasant it would be in my ears. And then, I thought, I would look straight into the eyes of Long Wolf, unbeliever, and say to him: "The gods are good to those who fast and pray!"

So thinking, I poured some powder into the palm of my hand, felt it, knew that it was not too much

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nor too little, and let it run down my gun barrel. After it I rammed a patched ball down, primed the firing-pan, and so felt strong to meet whatever would next try to do me harm.

I gave up hope of having a vision that night. I lay down again at the outer edge of the cave, stared out into the darkness, looked up at the Seven Persons, slowly turning in the north, and prayed them to pity me. After long waiting for her, Night Light came up her trail across the sky. Even before she appeared above the mountain-tops across the valley, the light that she gave enabled me to see, though dimly, the body of the bear. It lay at the foot of the slide rock, about halfway from me to the spring. I waited until Night Light cleared the mountains, and then went down to the bear, lying sprawled out in the upper edge of the brushy coulee. He was larger than I had thought him to be; fully as large-bodied as an old cow buffalo, though shorter of leg. His mouth was open, exposing his terrible teeth, the four yellow-white tushes as long as my thumbs. Be-

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cause he had lain in a den all winter, his fur was not yet faded and slipping; it was very long and thick, and in color dark gray. Many times I walked around him, and the longer I looked at his great size the more happy I was in having put an end to his trail. I was so happy over it, so proud, that it was all I could do to keep from shouting the victory song right there by his side. I did jump up onto his side and hum it, and dance; and then, laying aside my gun, I got out my knife and one by one unjointed his foreclaws, all of them longer than the width of my hand.

In these days of change, of the craziness of the Pikuni for the fine blankets, cloths, beads and paints and sweets of the white men, some of our hunters skin the bears that they kill, and trade the hides for these things. It was different in the time of my youth. As bears are half-human — one has only to look at one's body to know that — they should be, and were then, when slain, treated as any other enemy. Their foreclaws were taken, just as one took the scalp of Crow, Cree, or other

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enemy that he killed, but the body, hide and all, was given to Sun. So, now, having severed the claws of this, my great kill, I put them in my ball-pouch, and rising, prayed: "O Sun! Here, now, I give to you the body of this my enemy. I am weak, be you my strength! I am blind, do you make trail for me and keep me on it! Pity my mother, grandmother; all my relations; all men, women, children of our tribes, pity them. Allow us to survive all dangers, give us long and happy lives, I pray you! And to me, O Sun! give that which I here fast and pray for! Give me, and soon, the vision that I need!"

So having prayed, I went down to the spring and drank, washed my hands and knife, and started to return to the cave. I paused beside the body of the bear, again to admire its great size, and began climbing the steep slide rock down which he had rolled, leaving behind dark splashings of his blood. I had taken no more than three steps when, with a harsh rushing of air, a large rock crashed down upon the slide close on my left, and

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went rolling on down into the head of the spring coulee. I ran for the shelter of the cave, another rock thudding down just behind me, and climbed into it all out of breath and trembling. I had narrowly escaped death.

It suddenly came to me that the two rocks that had crashed down so near me had not just loosened from the cliff and dropped, else they would have struck the upper end of the steep slide and rolled down it. I had not heard the two break off; they had struck far out from the foot of the cliff; some one on top of it had hurled them at me! I had been weak, just sick from want of food, but the excitement of shooting the big bear had given me new strength. That was now gone; I was more weak and sick than before his coming. And now there came to me, as on my first night in the cave, that awful cry! Not a lone cry, but three times repeated; hoarse, long-drawn-out, as of one in terrible pain. It came from above, from the top of the cliff, and my last, small doubt vanished; the two rocks had been hurled at me! Here, on this

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high mountain-side, was an enemy who sought my life!

Red Wings, great Sun priest though he was, had been mistaken, I thought, in sending me to this red mountain. Instead of Sun protection here, I had found only trouble. The great bear had attacked me, and no sooner had I killed him than another and still worse enemy appeared. A man, probably, of a West-Side tribe, all of them our enemies. In order to obtain a vision, one must have peaceful surroundings; a feeling of safety where he lay. That would be impossible here. I decided to abandon the place, when day came, and do my best to avoid this enemy and return home. Without doubt he knew the way that I had come, and would lie in wait somewhere along the trail to ambush me. I had to decide upon some other way to camp. And if I did get there, what shame would then be mine in admitting that I had not obtained my vision — that I had been driven from my fasting-place! For once, how that Long Wolf would laugh at me!

CHAPTER V

DURING the rest of that night I sat with my back to the wall of the little cave, watching, listening for my enemy. He did not appear, nor did I hear further outcry from him. Daylight came at last, and how peaceful seemed that mountain slope; even the big, dead bear down at the foot of the slide rock had a restful appearance. Little birds were everywhere singing. Some white grouse came to the spring, drank, and strutted about. I hated to leave the place; decided to remain until Sun had climbed halfway up to the middle; by that time my enemy, tired from his all-night watch, and thinking that I would not leave my resting-place, himself would fall asleep, and I could make my escape. I, myself, could hardly keep my eyes open; never in all my life had I felt so tired, hungry, weak, and sleepy. I vowed that I would keep awake; upon that my life depended!

Sun soon rose above the mountain-tops and

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warmed the cave. As he climbed up into the blue, I noticed that no bands of bighorns and white goats came from above to drink; sure sign that my enemy was somewhere close up there. After a time a band of bighorns did come from the east to drink, but upon nearing the spring they smelled or saw the dead bear, and turned back upon their trail as fast as they could go. Came next a lone wolf, also from the east, trotting, and with head held high, and ears set forward, sniffing the air. Upon sighting the bear, he stopped short, stared at it, uneasily treading the ground with his forefeet, uncertain what to do. He finally turned down to the spring, watching the bear as he went, hastily lapped some water, and then went running on to the west. Both he and the bighorns had come from the east, and right upon the big game trail leading to Running Eagle's falls, and thence down the valley to the plains. They were an almost sure sign that my enemy was not hiding along it. I thought that I had better go, straight down to the trail and run along it as fast as I could in my great

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weakness, but still I lingered. Something, something that I could not sense, a feeling that I could not describe, held me there in the cave.

From somewhere above there now came to me the croaking of a raven; not the slow, occasional croak of one traveling, but quick, loud croaking as though the bird was excited about something. I leaned forward, looked up and saw, high above the top of the cliff, a large eagle circling around and around and the raven following as best it could, now and then flying close enough almost to strike its big enemy. But the eagle paid no attention to it; just kept on sailing around and around, and going higher, and with a few last croaks the raven left it and flew in to the mountain. I lost sight of it for a short time, and then, with set wings and two or three low croaks, it came down past me and dropped right upon the head of the bear and plucked out its exposed eye. That done, the bird walked back along the side of the body, and just behind the ribs began cutting into the hide with its sharp bill; but a few stabs and it ripped a slit

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through which it could get at the liver, and began eating of that greedily. I had slowly, cautiously lain down to rest my aching back while watching, and praying to this, the wisest, the best hunter of all the flyers, and the one most loved by Sun. Once, twice I caught myself closing my eyes, nodding my head, did my best to resist the sleepiness that was overpowering me — and slept!

I awoke and sat up, gun in hand, stared out upon the slope, saw nothing to alarm me. Sun was not halfway up to the middle; I had slept but a short time. In my heart was great happiness! In my body new strength! There in the light of day, and no doubt right under my enemy's watching-place, I had obtained my vision! I slept and my shadow — my other me — had gone forth seeking help and soon obtained it. All was very plain to me: Traveling through rough, foothills country, I had met a badger and asked him to be my helper, and he had dived down into his hole under a dead buffalo, giving me no answer. Then, farther on, I had one after another prayed an antelope, a wolf,

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a coyote, a lone old buffalo bull, and a fox to take pity upon me, to be my lifelong helper. The fox alone gave me answer, and he said: "I know one who has more favor with the gods than I; he lives just behind that hill; go ask him for help."

I went over the hill and down into a grove of cottonwoods beside a little stream, crying over and over: "Oh, you creatures of the air; you of the plains and forests; you of the waters! Take pity upon me, some one of you, and become my lifelong, secret helper, shield me from the dangers that I must meet upon my trail!"

Here in the trees and upon the ground were many kinds of little birds, flying and hopping about, seeking food, singing happily. Two minks were playing in the little stream; across from them a beaver sat on the bank, eating the bark from a willow cutting; a big-foot rabbit sat under a rose-bush; beyond him two whitetail deer were resting. Birds and animals, all seemed to pause and listen to my prayer and then look to the west; none of them gave me answer. I was so tired, so weak that

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I could go no farther. I sank to the ground, saying to myself as I closed my eyes: "None will help me; here I die!"

And now, though my eyes were closed, I could see, far off, the Sand Hills, and at the foot of them a great camp of shadow lodges. Shadow people, horses, dogs; all of them mimicking the lives they had led in the flesh. Among those silent, moving, shadow people I thought that I recognized my father, a brother, and several young friends, and how unhappy were their faces! How very dreadful it all was! I did not want to join those shadows! I did not want to live with them the never ending shadow life!

Then it was that I heard a loud fluttering of wings; it ceased and in a loud, deep voice I heard some one say: "You called for help, so I am come!"

I opened my eyes and sat up, and saw there, right in front of me upon the ground, a large raven. I cried out to him: "You, Raven, you will be my helper, my shield from danger along my life-trail?"

"Know this," he answered: "I am not one of

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my tribe that you see every day; I am their ancestor, first one of my kind, Ancient Raven. Long have I watched you and seen that you are of good heart. Yes, I will be your helper. I am close to Sun himself. When in need, when in doubt, when in trouble of any kind, call upon me and I shall give you help!"

"O generous one! How you put strength into me!" I cried, and would have said more had not what my astonished eyes now witnessed stopped my mouth. Right there before me that bird changed into a man, a man beautiful of face and body, and clothed in a war costume that shone like the light of Sun. Wonderful, beautiful beyond words to describe was he as he stood there close before me, and then, as quick as a flash of lightning, vanished; and in place of him, I saw the bird spring into the air and croaking loudly fly off to the west, whence he had come. And then I, my shadow, returned into my body, I awoke, and there I was, sitting upon my cave floor and staring down at the mountain slope!



RIGHT THERE BEFORE ME THAT BIRD CHANGED
INTO A MAN

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It was some time before I could fully realize that I had actually been given the vision, the helper that I sought. And what a helper; wisest of all the flyers, and of them all, most loved by Sun! Right then I prayed to him and to Sun himself to save me from my enemy, waiting somewhere near to take my life, and then, casting aside my robe, I slid from the cave, ran down the slide rock to the game trail, and turned upon it for home. My short vision-sleep had given me back a little of my strength; I ran quite fast; and as I ran, with gun cocked and ready to fire, I kept looking ahead and on both sides of the trail for the rock-thrower, and often looked back to see if he was following me. I soon made sure that he was not upon my trail, and bands of bighorn and goats scattered here and there ahead were proof enough that he had not gone that way.

These bands of game fled from my approach, hurrying all of them to the high cliffs of the mountain and there pausing to stare down at me. I was too weak to pursue and try to kill any of the animals, and oh, how badly I needed food. As I

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passed the end of the mountain and approached the falls of Running Eagle, my steps became wabbly; I stumbled down the ledge from which the river pours, and halfway across an open park below the falls, dropped into the grass, praying Ancient Raven to protect me.

I had lain in the park but a short time when I heard voices, and the thud of horses' feet in the trail below. A little later the riders—they were three—came into the open and proved to be, as I had been sure they were, hunters from our camp. I staggered to my feet, waved to them to come on, and dropped back into the grass. They had recognized me and hurried to my side.

“Ha! It is you!” cried one of them, a great hunter named Fox Eyes. “You went away to seek your vision. Mornings, and again at evening, Red Wings has been going the round of camp, calling upon us all to pray for your safety and success. How is it with you?”

“Good! All good! I have had my fast, a most powerful one has promised to be my helper — ”

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"Who may he be?" another of the hunters interrupted, with a teasing smile upon his lips.

"That is for Red Wings alone to know," I shortly told him; and then they all laughed. They had no thought that I would tell them my vision. Only to his Sun priest did one make that known. I have told you all about it, for you are white, and different, and will take no advantage of me.

"This you all shall know," I went on. "I have had a dangerous time, fasting back there upon that red rock mountain. A big real bear attacked me, and I killed him; here in my ball-pouch I have his claws. Then an enemy tried to kill me; in the night, last night, he threw two large rocks down at me. I think that he was sleeping when I made my escape from the little cave in the cliff where I fasted. Do not, oh, do not blame me for sneaking from there. I was too weak, too sick to remain and fight him. This far I came toward home, and could go no farther!"

"Blame you! Of course not! You did right!" Fox Eyes told me, and the others said so too. The

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three of them quickly asked me just where I had fasted, where I thought the rock-thrower might be found. And then Fox Eyes said: "We were about to cross the river and go into that heavy timber to hunt moose. But here is game worth while, your enemy. We go for him! Take you my horse and ride home."

They helped me get up into the saddle, asked if I was sure that I could ride to camp. They then picketed the other two animals there to await their return, and we parted. The one I rode was eager to return to his band; where the trail was smooth he trotted. It was but little past midday when I brought him to a stand before my lodge. Mother and grandmother helped me into the lodge to my couch, and old Red Wings came in close after us. All talking at once, they wanted to know how I had fared in my lone fast; if I had been given a vision. I answered that all was well; called for food. My mother gave me a bowl of soup, and no sooner had I drunk it than I fell asleep.

It was past midnight when I awoke from that

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needed sleep, but late though it was, my mother was still sitting up watching me, and before the little fire was a pot of boiled meat and soup. She gave me some of it. My grandmother awoke and looked out at me from under her coverings. As I ate and drank I told them all about my experiences in my fast, all excepting the name of the sacred bird that had become my helper. I showed them the claws of the big real bear, and how they admired them! Then, when I had finished, they gave me some very good, and some very bad news: At sundown, Fox Eyes and the other two hunters had come home with the scalp of my rock-throwing enemy. He had proved to be a member of the Snake tribe; that they knew by the peculiar fur-and-feather collar that he wore. When they sneaked upon him, he was skinning my bear, and now and then eating a mouthful of the raw meat and fat. Without doubt he had seen me making for home, and with my going had taken possession of my leavings, including the robe that I had cast aside in the cave. That was the good news, and

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now for the bad: near sunset, Long Wolf had come strutting into camp and he carried a large eagle upon his back!

Now, when I heard of Long Wolf's success my heart went almost dead!

I dropped back upon my couch, telling my mother that she should take to her couch, as I would need nothing more and wished to sleep. But I did not sleep! I kept asking myself if the suffering that I had endured, the dangers that I had narrowly escaped during my fast, had been all for nothing. Without fasting, without prayer even, Long Wolf had taken possession of an abandoned pit, and it containing a human skull, and there had seized an eagle! Were they right, then, his white brother-in-law and he, and we all wrong? Was the seizing of eagles just common work like trapping foxes and wolves? Was it true, as the white man claimed, that our belief in Sun was all foolishness — and our prayers just so much wasted breath? How I suffered from those dark thoughts! Over and over I said that there could be no ques-

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tion of the truth of our beliefs. Sun was! We could daily see him. Scar Face, our far-back ancestor, had visited him in his far-off island home, visited him, Night Light, his wife, Morning Star, their son, and great had been their kindness to him. I, myself, had I not proof that all that I had been taught was truth? With my own shadow eyes I had seen Ancient Raven, and heard him promise to be my lifelong sacred helper! Still — Long Wolf, unbeliever, had seized an eagle!

“Oh, what is true and what is false?” I kept asking myself, and could get no answer. I sweat over that; rolled and tossed about upon my couch. At last Sinuski and Nipoka came sneaking in to me. She lay down at my feet, but the wolf pup crept up and licked my face, and burrowed into my coverings. His warm little body against mine was a comfort. I fell asleep.

Sun was well upon his trail when I awoke. Carrying my clothes and with only my robe about me, I went to the river to bathe. Several youths of my age were on the shore, dressing after their

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swim. But a few days back they had played and joked with me; they now gave me shy greeting; watched me as though I were a stranger to them. I knew how it was: word had gone the round of camp that I had fasted, and had a vision; killed a real bear. To these youths I was no longer one of them. The respect that they now gave me was somewhat pleasing; still, I felt quite low-hearted because my days of play were forever ended. And then, from the time I awoke, all the doubts and questionings of the night had come back upon me!

Sinuski and Nipoka splashed into the water with me, swam about and followed me to the shore. The pup would have nothing to do with any one but me, shrinking even from my mother when she offered him food, and growling at my grandmother, whom he widely avoided. Me he loved, and that was some comfort in all the trouble of my mind.

My one-time playmates were gone when I came ashore. I hurriedly dressed and left the river. As I crossed the great camp circle I heard, away off to my left, a doctor singing and drumming in a lodge

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of the Never Laugh clan, but paid no attention to it, not even wondering who of the clan might be sick. Upon entering our lodge, my mother said that Red Wings had sent word for me to have the morning meal with him. I hurried across to his lodge; it had been my intention to go to him with my doubts and troubles as soon as he would receive me. He motioned me to a seat upon his left, and told his sits-beside-him woman to give us food. Just to look at him as he sat there under his sacred pipe roll, so calm, so wise, so sure of himself, was helpful. While we ate, he had me tell him about my killing of the real bear, and all that I knew of my rock-throwing enemy. And then, when the meal was over and the women had taken our empty bowls, he told them all to busy themselves with what outside work they had to do. They went, and as the door curtain dropped behind them, he turned to me and said: "Now we are alone; tell me, what was your vision?"

I described Ancient Raven, just as he had appeared to me as a bird, as he had all but blinded

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me with his Sun-beauty when he changed into man-form, and related all that he had said to me and I to him. I finished and, clapping his hands together, the old man cried out: "Truly, this is even better than my strongest hopes for you! Often and earnestly I prayed the gods to give you a good vision; well I knew that that red mountain was Sun-favored; but little did I think that so great, so powerful a bird-person as Ancient Raven would appear to you and offer to be your sacred helper! With him for your shield, my son, and you pray to him as you should pray, I foresee great success for you upon your life-trail!"

"Yes," I said. "Yes, but still, how I have suffered this night past! What terrible doubts are in me! Fasting, praying, sick, risking my life, I sought sacred help for that I so much want to do. And while I was doing that, Long Wolf, laughing at our gods, saying that our beliefs are all foolishness, went into an old pit and seized an eagle! Now, what am I to think of that?"

The old man had raised his hand to stop my

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talk, but I would not heed the sign. I finished; he straightened up, glared at me, and was opening his mouth to say to me I know not what hard things, when the door curtain was thrust aside and an old woman entered, knelt and whined: "Hai-yu! Red Wings! O powerful one! Loved by Sun! Take pity upon my grandson, Long Wolf. Pity me, his grandmother! He is sick! He suffers terribly! We ask you to come with your Thunder Pipe and pray for him!"

"Woman, what sickness has Long Wolf?" Red Wings asked.

"The black sickness!" she moaned. "Yesterday he seized an eagle; the mean bird stuck its claws into his right hand and it has turned black; it swells and the arm too! Since sunrise Red Robe has been doctoring him, and does no good; arm and hand turn blacker and more black, swell larger and larger! Come you, O powerful one, and help him!"

"Woman!" the old man sternly exclaimed, "your grandson scoffed at our gods; said that they were

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nothing; that our belief in them was foolishness! And now they punish him! It is not for me with my sacred Thunder Pipe to try to turn aside their vengeance! Do not argue with me! You may go!"

The woman looked up into his stern face, then arose and went out, crying, and I suddenly had great pity for her, and for Long Wolf too. I was thinking that I should ask the old man to try to help him, when he turned to me and said: "There you have the answer to your doubts! Go at once and sacrifice to the gods; beg them to forgive your bad thoughts in the night!"

There was something that I wanted to ask him, but I saw that this was not the time for it. I went home, got a beautiful belt of which I was very proud, carried it off into the timber, and tying it to a limb, offered it to Sun through my helper, Ancient Raven. Then, having prayed, I returned home.

Twice, during the day, I went to Red Wings' lodge to consult him and each time found him entertaining friends. What a long day that was! I

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wanted him to tell me that I could now begin seizing eagles. I was tempted to go right out to some high butte and dig a pit; it was hard to sit idle in my lodge when I so much wanted to be doing my chosen work! Nor could I keep my mind off Long Wolf, suffering so terribly for taking his white brother's word for truth. All day long I could hear old Red Robe doctoring him, hear him singing and praying while, meantime, he applied herb poultices to black-swollen arm and hand. I heard the women saying that all the Sun priests of the camp had refused to go to the sick one's lodge, and that of all the doctors, men and women, Red Robe alone was trying to make a cure.

At last, near sunset, I saw Red Wings' guests depart, and hurried to get speech with him.

"I am anxious to begin seizing eagles. Tell me a good place where, to-morrow, I may start digging a pit," I said.

He smiled, slowly shook his head and answered: "Not to-morrow, my son! Not for many to-morrows — many moons, perhaps!"

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"But I have had my vision! I have a powerful helper now, Ancient Raven himself — " I cried.

He signed me to be still. "I will question you," he said. "Now, who wear eagle tail feathers, and why?"

"Men wear them; because they are very beautiful," I answered.

"Feathers of some mountain birds, and of some of the water are even more beautiful, but are they worn, used for any purpose? No! Men wear war bonnets of eagle tail feathers, fringe their shields with them, not for their beauty, but because they are feathers of Sun's own bird, emblems of bravery, and so a protection in war. And so it is that none but the brave, men who have fought the enemy and counted *coup* upon them, may be catchers of eagles."

"But I can count a *coup*; did I not kill a real bear, up there where I fasted?"

"Not enough of a *coup* for a seizer of eagles! I now remind you of your promise to me; that if I would help you to become a seizer of eagles, you

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would never step from the trail that I marked out for you.”

“Those were my words; I still say them,” I answered.

“Good! Your trail now leads to the enemy! When you have faced them, and counted *coup* upon them—even one *coup*—then, and not until then may you attempt to seize the far-blue flyers,” he ended, and with a wave of his hand signed that I could go.

“Red Wings says that I must go to war,” I told my mother when I had come into our lodge.

“Oh, no! Not yet, my son, later; after two or three more winters — ”

“Oh, yes! Of course he will go! Now! Just as soon as any war-party leader will take him for his pipe-carrier,” my grandmother told her.

My mother said no more, but cried a little as she prepared our evening meal.

I had always known that I should go to war; all youths looked forward to that, except—rarely—one who was a born coward. There was such a one

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now in our camp, a man grown, disowned by his family, made by the chiefs to wear a woman's dress and do the work of women. His was a hard life! I shivered as I thought of him! I wondered how I should feel when I met the enemy. I should have fear of them? Yes. But I should call upon Sun and Ancient Raven to protect me, and do my best to count at least one *coup*. My heart was away down that night; too long was my trail to an eagle pit!

CHAPTER VI

AT meal-time, next morning, we heard loud wailing in the lodges of the Never Laugh clan; Long Wolf was dead!

“Ha! He got just what he deserved! It will be a long time before others of our youths listen to the white traders, and attempt to follow their trail!” my grandmother exclaimed.

“But he was so young; he had not attained good sense. I had great pity for him!” my mother said.

“I hoped that he would be allowed to recover,” said I

“I just will not sit here and hear you pity such as he was! I shall go eat my morning food with Heavy Runner’s women!” my grandmother scolded, and out she went, sniffing and snorting and muttering to herself.

“Always cross, always scolding us! We never can say anything — do anything to please her!” I said.

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“Her many winters sit heavy upon her; we must always be patient with her crossness,” my mother told me.

We ate our meat in silence, my mother, I well knew, grieving over the thought of the dangers that I must soon face. I was wondering how soon, and with whom, I should be taking the trail to the enemy.

The meal ended, I went out to find my horses and drive them to water, Sinuski and Nipoka following close at my heels. The wolf pup was so fat that he would soon tire and lag behind, and I would then carry him for a time. I noticed that he was much more inquisitive than were dog pups of his age; he was already sniffing at rocks, bushes, hummocks of grass, and would often turn aside to follow a little way the trail of some animal that had passed in the night. When I found the horses and mounted one of them, I always had him ride in front of me, and he liked that above all things, telling me so by wagging his fuzzy tail and trying to reach up and lick my face.

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This morning as I drove the horses in, women of the Never Laugh clan passed me on their way to put the body of Long Wolf up into some near-by tree. It was bound in a great roll of robes, and drawn by an old travois horse which one of the women led. I felt great pity for the mourners, and for him who, but a few mornings back, had come to me at the old eagle pit and boasted what he would do there! And now — his shadow was already away out in the Sand Hills, there forever to lead the dreary life of the dead! I hoped that that would not soon be my fate. I prayed Ancient Raven to beg Sun to give me a full, long life.

Having watered the horses and turned them loose to graze out into the hills, I went first to Red Wings, and then to Heavy Runner to ask if they knew of any one getting up a war party. They gave me the names of three men, and I went to one after another and pleaded to be allowed to go with him as his pipe-bearer, stating that I had taken my lone fast and obtained a powerful helper. Each one answered that I had come too late; he had al-

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ready selected a youth to carry his pipe and wait upon him. Terribly disappointed, I went back to Red Wings, and got some comfort from him; he said that I was not to feel bad, that other parties would be going out later on, and I should be allowed to join one or another of them. In the meantime, I was to use his gun when I needed it, and keep his lodge supplied with meat and hides, as well as my own lodge. He then had his sits-beside-him woman hand him a certain parfleche, and, after much fumbling of its lacings, opened it and drew out, to my astonishment, two Redcoat traders' beaver traps.

"There!" he exclaimed, as he tossed them clinking to the ground in front of me. "Long have they lain idle in that parfleche! Never have I loaned them — men are always careless of things they borrow — but now I loan them to you for I know that you are not careless, young though you are. Use them, trap as many beavers as possible while you wait for the chance to go to war. Why, you may take enough hides with which to trade for a gun!"

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"But I don't know how to set traps for beavers," I told him. "The Kaina trappers never would let me go with them to see how it is done. Each one of them has his secret way to get the best of the wise wood-cutters, and keeps it to himself."

"Oh, yes, I know, they, and our trappers too, all make great talk about wonderful ways they have discovered to do their work. But here is the truth: there are but two or three ways to set beaver traps, and all trappers learn from their elders, or find out for themselves what those ways are. Come! The day is young; bring in two horses; old though I am, I shall teach you how to trap the wise little tree-cutters!"

I ran in two of my horses, and while saddling them heard the old man singing the Wolf Song, heard him then say to his women: "Hai! But it is a long time since I have sung that brings-success-to-the-hunter song! Somehow, I feel strong this morning; strong to help my young relative. In doing this, my own youth seems to come back to me!"

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Out he came from the lodge, gun in one hand and traps in the other, handed the traps to me, and climbed up into his saddle. "Now we go! Beavers, you are to die!" he cried, and led off down the valley. He had put on a cap made of the head skin of a wolf; the black nose of it projected well out from his forehead, and the broad, smoothly dried ears pointed forward. Looking back at me, he put a hand to it and said: "Some day I shall give you this head covering; it is a powerful help to the hunter!"

CHAPTER VII

LEAVING the valley well below camp, we turned off southwest over a timber and prairie ridge, and struck the south fork of Two Medicine Lodges River. Here and there along it was much sign of beavers, ponds new and old, and cuttings of timber around them. But the big game trail that we were now following was well packed by the travel of our hunters and trappers, and the old man led steadily on, calling back to me: "I knew that our men would be trapping here, but never mind, I'll soon show you some beaver ponds that I am sure they have not found."

After riding up the valley past the last of the ponds, we turned north up the steep, heavily timbered slope, following up a stream that was in most places just a trickle of water no wider than my two hands. Looking at it, I felt sure that beavers could not inhabit so small a stream. The old man had forgotten the trails of his long-ago

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trapping days; he was heading straight up to the bare, rocky crests of the mountains! I wanted to, but did not dare, ask him if he had not lost his way.

Up and up we went, and after what seemed to me a very long time, came into a wide, round basin between two mountains. Here the old man turned to the north up the side of the basin, brought his horse to a stand upon an open slide of rock and called to me to ride up beside him. I did so, and he pointed down. I could hardly believe my eyes; there in the center of the basin, surrounded with a thick growth of quaking aspens and cottonwoods and willows, was a string of five large beaver ponds. It did not seem possible that the little streamlet that we had followed could ever have furnished enough water to fill them, but there they were, their little waves glittering in the light of Sun

“I just brought you up here so you could see them all as they lie. Don’t they look like plenty of skins for you?” the old man asked.

“Yes, they do look so,” I answered in a small

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voice, and felt very small, very much ashamed that I had doubted his sense of direction.

“The last time I was here — oh, how many, many summers back! — there were but two ponds. And now they are five! I am glad of that for your sake! Let us hurry down to them! From those ponds, if you follow my teaching, you shall obtain the gun that you so much need!” he said.

We left our horses just below the lower pond and proceeded to it on foot. Its dam had been recently heightened and strengthened with cuttings of willows and plasterings of mud. Many trails ran out from it into the grove; three new and four old lodges rose high above the water at its upper end. “Counting five to the lodge, old and young, there are no less than thirty-five beavers in this one pond,” the old man told me, and paused before a well-used trail. Where it steeply sloped down the bank into the water it was very smooth and hard, and still wet from the passing of the workers during the night.

And now the old man showed me how to set a

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trap for beavers, carefully explaining the reason for everything that he did. First, though, he said that a trap must be so set that the beaver could not possibly get ashore with it, nor into shallow water, else he would gnaw his caught leg free from the jaws and make his escape.

He now cut a willow chain pole about three steps in length, with a stout fork at its tip, and at its butt small enough to slip easily through the ring of the chain; the many small branches along it were lopped off with an out-slanting cut, so that the ring would slide past them, but not back, the slight, forward fork that they made from the pole preventing that. The ring could not, of course, slip over the forked tip of the pole. The trap was now set, the two springs being turned against the jaw that was held down by the trigger of the pan; this allowing the other jaw to fall a little below the level of the pan. Next, the trap was lowered into the water at the foot of the slide, a little way out from it, and at a depth of about two hands was worked into the mud so that it lay level and would

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not slide off into deeper water. When the beaver swam to the foot of the slide to climb it, he would place his forepaws upon it and let his hind part sink, and one or the other of his hind feet would strike the pan, and the jaws would grip the leg. It was essential that the trap should always be set well below the reach of the beaver's forelegs, for they were so small and weak that the animal could easily twist himself free from them.

The trap now in place, and the chain ring slipped upon the pole, the old man knelt at the edge of the bank and forced the butt of the pole deep into it at one side of the slide, and well under water, and so slanted that the tip, straight out in the pond, was upon or close to the bottom; no part of the pole was in sight above the surface of the water. Lastly, to prevent the pole being swung one way or the other in against the shore, two stout pegs were driven deep into the mud upon each side of it, a little way out from the bank and under water, their upper ends crossing so that the pole could be raised no more than it could be drawn sideways. That

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done, the old man scooped water with one hand, dashing it upon the slide, and where he had knelt, destroying all scent of him, and then lightly tip-toed his way back to where I stood.

“There, that trap is set, well set,” he said. “Tonight, on his way to this wood-cutting trail, a beaver will get a hind foot in it. When the jaws snap shut and terrible pain and fear run all through his body, he will think that some enemy of the shore is at him, turn and dive for deep water, drawing trap and chain as he goes. The chain ring slips out along the pole, stops short when it strikes the forked tip; the beaver can go no farther and turns and tries to swim back to land to gnaw off his caught leg. But the chain ring strikes one of the little limb projections and brings the beaver to a stop with a jerk; he is now needing air and comes to the top, pawing the water, making it boil and foam as he tries to keep the heavy trap and chain from dragging him down. But down he goes; comes back to the surface once, perhaps twice, and gets a breath of air, and sinks for the last time; a

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few bubbles of air come up from him; that is the end; he lies there on the bottom, drowned!"

"You tell it as though you had seen a beaver get into a trap," I said.

"Yes, three times I have seen that, and each time it was the same; a dive for deep water, a struggle for air, and all over while one would be counting fifty!"

"You spoke of two or three ways of catching beavers."

"Yes. In winter, when the beavers are not using the slides, a hole is cut in the ice close to one of their lodges. Looking down through it, the entrances to the lodge can be seen. In front of these the traps are set by being carefully lowered with a stick, the chain ring sliding down a long, smooth pole that has been driven deep into the bottom mud, the upper end being held in place by the ice. And now for the one other way to trap these wise wood-cutters: Like men, dogs, wolves and other animals, they are very inquisitive; most of all they are always wanting to know who of their kind have

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been traveling about. The trapper takes advantage of that; having caught a beaver, he takes out its scent glands, full of yellow, thick stuff of powerfully strong odor, and having set his trap, he puts a little of this on the end of a twig that he sticks into the mud so that it stands well above the water and close to the trap. The first beaver that comes along swims straight to the stick to smell it, as he pauses letting his hind part sink; one of his hind feet strikes the trap pan, and that is the end for him! The trapper should always carry some of this scent, for it is most useful where traps cannot be set at the foot of slides owing to the shallowness of the water. Where that is the case, as in many ponds, and along some parts of streams, one has only to go above or below until he finds sufficient depth of water near the bank, and there set and scent his trap."

"And that is all?"

"Yes, except that, when one wants to trap in a pond that has too shallow water at the foot of the slides, and he has no gland scent, then he may tear

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out a small part of the top of the dam, just enough to let a little water run through it, and then upon the inner slope of the dam set the trap just as he would at the foot of a slide, placing it at the right depth in front of the torn-out place. In the evening, as soon as they come out from their lodges, the beavers will know that the dam has been broken, and the first one hurrying there to repair it will get into the trap. Myself, I do not like that way of trapping. Just you begin tearing a place in a dam and you will learn what hard work is; the mud-and-stone-packed willows and cuttings of small trees are interwoven so tightly that it is all but impossible to pull them apart!"

"Great-uncle, you are very good to me this day," I said. "You have shown me how to set traps for beavers, taught me all that you know about catching them. The next time I hear any one bragging about his wonderful, secret way of trapping I am afraid that I shall laugh at him."

"No, don't do that!" the old man exclaimed. "Never laugh at braggers, and let liars tell their

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lies and go in peace; that, my son, is the way to get along. Would you be a chief, and that is what I want to see you before I die, then be not only brave, honest, generous, but listen pleasantly to the foolish, as you do to the wise of our people! But enough! We now set the other trap, and go home."

It was I set it, at a slide farther up the pond, and when I finished and turned from the shore, the old man said that he could not better have placed it.

Sun was just coming in sight, the next morning, when I hurried to the river for my bath with Sinuski and the pup. Then, hastily putting on my clothes, I ran in the horses, saddled one of them, ate a little meat, and was off to see my traps, the pup stowed in his sack at the saddle-bow, and the dog closely following. With Red Wings' gun across my lap, and sitting straight, I rode out through camp pretending not to see, but eagerly watching the people to learn if they were looking at me. Well-clothed, well-mounted, and carrying a gun, I was very proud of myself, and thought that I was

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well worth their following eyes. Two other trappers were going my way, and I rode with them across the ridge to the south fork of the river, along which they had their traps. One of them asked me where I had mine set, and I answered: "Oh, up there a little way." They laughed, and the other said: "We know the place. You will probably see us up there a day or two later on."

That hurt! I did n't want to see any one in my trapping-ground. I wanted the five ponds all for my own! On my way up the little creek that flowed from them, I saw a number of deer, and a few elk, but was now so anxious to get to my traps that I did not try to kill one of them. The nearer I rode to the ponds the more excited I became, until, at last, when I sighted the lower one and sprang from my horse, I was so anxious — by turns hopeful and so doubtful of my luck — that I trembled as I tied the horse and let Nipoka out of his riding-sack. I ran to the pond, stopped short at the head of the first slide, and stared into the water. I could see the trap pole as far out as the pegs that held it

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down; beyond, all was hidden by the glitter of the water. The pole had not been even shaken, I thought. The foot of the slide was not wet and shiny as it had been on the previous morning. All for nothing had been the old man's careful setting of the trap! I was so badly disappointed that I felt sick. I started to go on to the other trap, the one that I had set, then turned back, knelt at the edge of the slide and with a slender stick began to poke in the mud for this trap. I had to be sure that it was in place. Suddenly I remembered that the ring of the chain had been in plain sight on the pole; it was not now in sight! Out came those pegs! I seized the pole, tore it from its setting and began to draw it in; there was a heavy drag upon it; how my heart thumped as I felt that! Hand over hand I pulled in the pole, the chain at the end, and then with a surge, out came a big beaver, all humped up and stiff, his little forepaws drawn tight up to his breast. I seized hold of his tail and carried him dripping to the top of the bank, trap, chain pole, and all. Nipoka made a lunge at the body and I

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drove him off, but back he came, growling, and tried to bite and shake it, and I let him have his way. Was n't I happy! I sat down and stared at the beaver, admiring his big, round body, broad, flat tail, and thought what a large hoop would be required into which to lace and dry his hide. Then up I sprang and ran to my trap set, and this time I looked for the chain ring, could not see it, and knew that I had another beaver. I soon had it ashore, this my very own catch! I freed it from the trap and lugged it down to the other one, and how rich I felt as I gazed at them lying side by side! I had to catch but thirty-eight more and I could have a gun of my own! How long would that take at two beavers a day? I broke some twigs into short pieces for counters and figured it out: nineteen days. How few; in less than a moon I would have the number that I needed!

Leaving Sinuski and the pup to watch the beavers, lest some night prowler sneak off with them, I hurriedly but carefully reset the traps, each one at the foot of a slide at the upper end of the pond.

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Then, tying the beavers each by a hind leg and swinging them across the saddle, I put Nipoka in his sack and rode home.

My mother was all smiles and praise for me, and even my grandmother was for once pleased, when I let the beavers slide to the ground in front of our lodge. I was just to go inside and rest, they said. My work for the day was done; they would unsaddle my horse and turn him loose, and then skin and hoop the hides of my catch. My evening meal should be a real feast; broiled beaver tails!

But I could n't rest until Red Wings learned what I had brought from the pond. I hurried to his lodge and told him; explained how I had reset the traps, each in front of a fresh slide. In the morning I would have two more beavers; in nineteen more days, forty beaver hides with which to buy a gun!

I saw that he was smiling very queerly, while I talked, and thought that it was his old man's amusement at my youthful eagerness, my sureness that I would have the number of skins I needed in

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nineteen days. Well, perhaps I had been oversure of that; maybe I would be longer in getting them; on some mornings I might find but one beaver in my traps.

But now I suddenly straightened up and looked at myself; my clothing; my hands. I felt my face, my hair; what was wrong that not only the old man but his women too were smiling at me so queerly?

I began to be a little angry and cried out: "Why are you all laughing at me? What is wrong with me?"

"Nothing is wrong with you," the old man replied. "We smile a little because of the surprise that we have for you. Not for a long time are you to trap more beaver!"

"What? Stop trapping when I have just begun? Not get skins for the gun that I need?"

"I will attend to the trapping; for you, my son, you are going to war!"

"Going to war! Going to war!" I cried, staring at him, doubting my ears. And at that they all laughed loudly.

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"Enough!" the old man told his women, and motioned them to be silent. "We were but smiling at the surprise you were to have. Well, we give you good news, do we not?" he said to me, very soberly.

"Yes. But I don't understand. How has this come about?"

"It is your grandmother's doing."

"My grandmother's!" I exclaimed. Still less did I understand. What had a woman to do with war?

"Well, it was mostly her doing, and maybe I helped a little. For some days back she has been at your uncle, Heavy Runner, to make up a war party, and take you with him for his pipe-bearer. Oh, but she has used her tongue! Heavy Runner told her that he did not want to go against the enemy; he had done his share of that; the time had come for him to take life easy. 'Oh, do so!' she scolded. 'Rest in your lodge! Feast and get fat! Neglect the one young relative that you have! Oh, how different it would have been if I could have kept him with his father's people, my people;

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the Kaina chiefs would have been glad to teach him the ways of the war trail!’

“I think that that stung your uncle. He told the old woman to go home and stay home, for she was worse than a cloud of wasps in his lodge. He then came and talked with me; said that he was growing old, too old for far trails to the camps of the enemy; still, he could lead one more party against them if none else would take you. I told him that it was plainly his duty to take you out, for he would teach you more than any one of another clan. Well, he is now making up his party. To-morrow morning I shall get out my Thunder Pipe for you all, and in the evening you are to leave for a raid upon the Assiniboines.”

As I went home from the old man’s lodge, I had so much to think about that I hardly knew what I was doing. What a full day it had been for me; success in trapping, and now the wonderful news that I was to go to war! That was better than trapping, for it meant, if I lived, that I could soon become a seizer of eagles!

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Out in front of our lodge the women were skinning the beavers. I stopped to watch them, and said to my grandmother: "I hear that you have been making strong talk for me."

"Some one had to talk for you, none other would, not even your own mother, so I had to do it!" she snapped.

"Well, here is the result of it; to-morrow evening I take the war trail with Heavy Runner," I told her.

She stared up at me, dropping her knife, and covering her head with her wrap began to cry. My mother signed to me to go inside. I went in and sat down upon my couch. How very queer women were, I thought. There was my grandmother crying, when the very thing that she had made great talk for was to be done.

CHAPTER VIII

WHEN the great camp learned that Heavy Runner was to lead a war party against the Assiniboines, men from all the different clans came hurrying to his lodge to say that they wanted to follow him. He had always been so successful a leader that he could have had all the men; but that would have left the camp defenseless. At the same time he did not want to offend any one by refusing to allow him to join the party; so, after a talk with Lone Walker, the head chief, he made it known that this time he would lead only the men of three bands of the All Friends Society; the Seizers, of which he himself was the leader, and the Braves, and All Crazy Dogs. A few members of these bands had recently gone to war with Lone Bull, the war chief of the tribe, for their leader, leaving in all one hundred and eighty men for our party, including Heavy Runner and myself. Late in the evening he sent for me, and named the different

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things that I was to carry: his pipe, war clothes, extra pairs of moccasins, several lariats, and a pouch containing sinew thread, awls, needles, and a little leather for repairing moccasins and clothing. He then explained what my duties were to be: I was to supply the wood for his fire, cook his food, make good sleeping-places for him, be always ready day and night to do anything that he asked.

On the following morning, Red Wings had his women put up a sweat lodge in which he was to use his Thunder Pipe in prayers for those of our clan who were to go out upon the war trail. When all was ready, and several rocks were heated to bright red in a fire close to the lodge, we all went inside, leaving our clothing and wraps at the outer edge of the lodge. Red Wings was there awaiting us, his sacred pipe exposed upon a spread of buckskin in front of him. The covering of the lodge was of pieces of old lodge-skins; enough light came through them to permit us dimly to see one another. Heavy Runner sat next to the old man, on

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his right; I upon his left; ten others of our clan made up the circle. This was my first entrance into a sacred sweat lodge. I was eager for the experience; anxious for the ceremony to begin. But nothing was done, no one spoke. I became so nervous that I could n't sit still. We could hear in different parts of the camp the singing of various sacred songs; every one of the clans had its sweat lodge that morning, in which were gathered those who were to go out with Heavy Runner. Why this long delay in our lodge, I wondered. Then said Red Wings: "While sitting here, I have been thinking of the trail that you are to follow, a trail that my feet have trod more than once. After leaving Hairy Cap, last butte of the Wolf Mountains, you will see Stone Bull¹ lying out there alone upon the great plain. Be sure that you pause at his

¹ Stone Bull: Okwitok-Stumik. A large rock having the appearance of a buffalo bull lying down. It is due east of the Hairy Cap, easternmost butte of the Little Rocky Mountains, and in the Big Bend of Milk River. It was greatly venerated by the Blackfeet tribes. Prayers and offerings to it were believed to bring good success in war and in hunting.

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side; pray to him and give of the things that you can spare. Very close to Sun is he!"

"Our prayers and offerings he shall have," Heavy Runner answered.

The old man then called to his women to pass in the rocks. Some one lifted the edge of the lodge, and they came rolling in, fire-red, and making the green grass smoke, and were pushed on with sticks into the hole in the center of our circle that had been dug for them. As soon as they were in place, Red Wings lightly sprinkled them with a dried buffalo tail which he dipped into a bowl of water. With great hissing, dense hot steam at once filled the lodge, and I thought that it would strangle me. The others did not seem to mind it. Red Wings began the song of Ancient Buffalo, and before it was finished I breathed so much easier that I was able to join in the singing of it. More water was then sprinkled upon the rocks; the steam became more dense; perspiration streamed from our bodies. One after another of them, we then sang the three other songs of the sacred pipe. That done, the old

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man had the women pass in a coal of fire with which he lit the pipe. He blew smoke to the gods above, to those of the earth, and the four world directions, and then he prayed them so earnestly for our success and safety away out upon the plains, that we all felt strong to begin the trail. He passed the pipe; one by one we took it, blew smoke to the gods, and prayed them to help us, to keep us safe and help us to count *coups* upon the enemy. So ended the ceremony. We reached outside for our wraps, took up our clothing, and ran to the river and plunged into it.

Upon returning to my lodge after the ceremony, I saw my two beaver skins nicely laced into willow hoops. They had been so well fleshed that the skin sides were as white as snow. I turned and went to Red Wings about the traps that I had reset. He said that I was not to worry; if there were beavers in them, they would not spoil in a day and night in the cold snow water of the ponds. He would go up there in the morning, and continue trapping in the ponds as long as our camp remained where it

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was, and the skins that he got should be mine. I told him that he was too generous, and he replied that the sooner I was able to trade for a gun the better he would be pleased, the less he would worry when the time came for me to go out alone to seize eagles. He did not offer to loan me his gun, nor did I ask him for it, well knowing that he would need it while going to and from the ponds; during my absence he was to keep my lodge supplied with meat as well as his own, a hard task for one so old and dim-eyed.

Upon again nearing home I heard singing in the lodge, a man singing, I thought. I was so surprised that I stopped short to listen; men did not visit us to sing nor for any other purpose. But now I caught the words:

“Oh ho hai yi ya! Now are the enemy to pay.
Now are they to pay for what they have done to me!
They who killed my son, they shall themselves be
Killed by my son's son! Oh ho hai yi ya yay!
Little Otter! Little Otter! Little Otter! He, my grandson,
Now goes forth to avenge the death of his father!
Oh ho hai yi ya! Oh ho hai yi ya yay!”

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My grandmother was the singer! Never would I have known it but for the words of the song! Never had I heard a voice so harsh, so full of hate! It made me see things: dead, staring-eyed, and blood-smeared bodies lying about upon the plain!

Ending her song, the old woman cried out to my mother: "You don't like my song! You women of the Pikuni are faint hearts; you would keep your sons always by your lodge-fires! Well, I am glad that Little Otter is not of your tribe; his father being what he was, you just can't spoil him!"

"I am not spoiling him!" my mother answered. "I want him to go to war, but I am not to be blamed for feeling sad; my man, my brave, good man left me, never to return, so how can I help thinking that — "

"Don't say it! Don't dare say it; that might bring us bad luck!" the old woman broke in. "Oh, I take back my mean words to you! I feel just as sad, just as anxious as you do! But he will soon be coming in; we must hide our fears; let us smile!"

Silently I stole away and wandered about in

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camp for a time. They never suspected that I had heard their talk. I was glad that I had overheard it, for now I knew that, underneath all her hard words, my grandmother had kindly feeling for my mother.

That was a long day to me. Time and again I put on the things that I was to carry, trying different ways of distributing them about my person, and at last decided that Heavy Runner's pipe-roll and lariats should go upon my back, along with my bow-and-arrow case, and the cylinders containing his war clothes, his pouch of sacred things and mine of repairs, should hang upon each side of me. With them all hung upon me I seemed to have a large load, but they were of little weight.

With the setting of Sun our large party gathered in front of Heavy Runner's lodge, and back of us stood a great crowd of women and children to see us depart. Inside the lodge, the chief, White Bear, leader of the Braves, and Iron Shirt, leader of the All Crazy Dogs, were having a last smoke and council with Red Wings. My women stood just



OUR LARGE PARTY GATHERED IN FRONT OF HEAVY RUNNER'S LODGE

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behind me, and the last thing they said to me was that they would take the best of care of my wolf pup. At dusk our men came out from the lodge and I took my place behind Heavy Runner, who led off with his Seizers band. Next in line were the Braves, and last the All Crazy Dogs. None spoke as we made our way down through the great camp, and, heavy though their hearts were, no women of the crowd of them cried over our going, at least not so that we could hear them. A little way below camp we crossed the river on a log jam, and leaving the valley struck off southeast across the plain to cut a big bend off of the stream.

With the first faint, white light of coming day we were still cutting the big bend, but were now quite close to the breaks of the river. A little way farther on we came to a halt upon the end of a ridge from which we could see up and down the valley, and there, all lying down, we awaited the rising of Sun. Up he came and we all prayed to him and were cheered. Herds of buffalo and antelope here and there upon the plain, and down under

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us in the valley made us still more happy. Heavy Runner told off five men to kill some meat for us. We watched them sneak down a deep coulee running into the river; a bend in it hid them from us as they neared a small band of buffalo. We were very hungry for some of that good meat, so eager for our hunters to make a good killing that it was hard to sit still.

“If they fail to kill it will be a long time before we eat, for the running herd will frighten all the game out of the valley,” some one said.

“They probably will fail to kill!” said another.

“Absolutely close your mouths, you bringers of bad luck! Just for that talk you two shall have only the hooves to eat,” Heavy Runner told them; and we all laughed.

And now we saw five puffs of smoke down in the sagebrush at the edge of the coulee; five guns boomed; the herd of buffalo surged together and ran off down the bottom, leaving two of their number sprawling upon the ground, and a third running about in a circle. As it stumbled against one of the

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others and dropped beside it, we all sprang up and hurried down the slope. There were soon four men skinning each one of the buffalo. We surrounded them and sat down, waiting patiently for the meat to be properly cut up. When that was done, I was the first to the pile of it for our band, and asked the cutters for a tongue and some ribs for my chief. They were quickly handed to me.

Camp was now made in a big grove near our kill, and each of the bands soon had six or eight small fires burning. Heavy Runner chose a resting-place in some willows close to the river, and some distance from the long camp and its talk and laughter. Leaders of war parties always did that, so as not to be disturbed in their prayers, and dreams. Before lying down to sleep they prayed that they be given revealing dreams — visions of what danger, if any, was ahead upon the trail, so that they would know what to do, whether to face it or avoid it.

I had heard so much about the duties of pipe-bearers that I did not need to be told what to do now. First, I built a small fire, and then collected

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several armfuls of dead grass and leaves for a soft bed for the chief. Then, when the fire had burned to a good bed of coals, I broiled the buffalo tongue for him — it was all that he wanted — and some rib meat for myself. We ate all that I had cooked, and he then had me invite White Bear and Iron Shirt to smoke three pipefuls with him. I sat to one side of them, putting a stick upon the fire now and then, and listening to their talk.

Heavy Runner said that he would leave to them the daily naming of the men who were to stand watch while we slept. The number of them would depend upon the kind of country we were in, and always, at midday, the morning watchers were to be relieved by fresh men. Then there was much talk about the route we were to take to the enemy camp, which was believed to be in the vicinity of the mouth of Little River, in a bottom of Big River, or not far north of it. Iron Shirt argued that we should follow Big River until fresh signs of the enemy were discovered, but Heavy Runner agreed with White Bear that that route was too rough,

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and decided that we should go down Two Medicine Lodges River to Bear River, down it to Big River, and then strike out across the plain to the Bear-Paw Mountains, thence along the east slope of the Wolf Mountains and on to Little River, which we should strike in its Big Bend.

When the third pipeful had been smoked, and his guests had gone back to their men to send out the watchers, Heavy Runner told me that I could go over to the main camp to sleep, and in the late afternoon return to learn if he wanted anything. As I left him, he was beginning his prayers for a revealing dream. I went to the camp of the Seizers, the most of them still sitting around their little fires, smoking, telling stories, and joking with one another. Several tried to joke with me, wanting to know how I liked making a pack-horse of myself; what had been my argument in the talk about our route; how many *coups* I expected to count when we should strike the enemy. But I was too tired to answer; I lay down at the foot of a big cottonwood and at once fell asleep.

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In the middle of the afternoon Sun shining hot upon my face awoke me and I sat up, hardly knowing where I was. Away down through the grove, as far as I could see, were sleeping men. I got up and went noiselessly up to the camp of my chief, saw that he was still asleep, so lay down again, and again slept soundly. Sun was low in the west when next I awoke. Heavy Runner was calling to me to go into the river. It was already full of men swimming and splashing about. The water freshened us. We came out of it, dressed, combed out and re-braided our hair, and then I hurried to build a fire and cook the evening meal. A little while before dusk the watchers came in from the rims of the valley, reported the country quiet, and hurriedly ate the meat that had been broiled for them. I put on my load of things and followed my uncle over to the big camp, where he talked with Iron Shirt and White Bear until all were ready to take the trail. I heard him say that he had had no dream.

During the night we passed the different streams running into Two Medicine Lodges River, and at

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daylight crossed the last one of them, Cutbank, and so made camp upon the beginning of Bear River. We were three nights following it down, meeting no adventure of any kind, and making our last camp upon it not far from its junction with Big River. We were here only a half-day of foot travel from the fort of the Long Knives traders, and while we were eating our morning meal, Iron Shirt and White Bear this time with my uncle and me at our little fire, there was talk about the fort, its rooms full of trade goods, and much was said about the chief of the fort, Long Hair (Alexander Culbertson), who was married to one of the women of the Pikuni. Heavy Runner declared that he was a real man, kind-hearted, brave, truthful.

The talk made me very wistful to see that wonderful fort with its shining heavy guns, its beautiful and useful goods, and to meet its kind chief. I wondered if he would take any notice of me, just a boy? I said to myself that he should take notice of me; that I should make myself worth being noticed by him. I should soon be seizing eagles,

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and trading their tails for buffalo robes, furs of all kinds, and horses. Dressed all in my best clothes and riding a fine horse, I should appear at the fort. Behind me would be my mother and grandmother, also riding good horses and driving others loaded with the robes and furs, many loads of them. By that time I should have my new name. The white chief would be told of my arrival, and come out and greet me: "Old Sun, you are welcome in my fort this day. Enter! Enter and feast with me." Then, later on, we would all go into the trade room and I should say to my women: "All that I want is a gun and plenty of food for it; count out the skins for that, and with all the remaining skins and all the robes buy whatever you choose!" How surprised they would be when I said that to them; and how happy! They would buy and buy blankets, pretty cloths, beads, all kinds of things. They would go out of that fort with more of the beautiful and useful goods of the white men than any other women who ever entered it!

Yes, such were my thoughts as I tended the little

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fire and broiled a set of antelope ribs for my uncle and his friends. How easy it seemed to be, my chosen trail to a great name, great riches, and the friendship of great men! Then, suddenly I had something else to think about; a man came hurrying to us with the news that many horse tracks, no more than a day old, were plain in the game trails just below camp!

Upon hearing that, both Iron Shirt and White Bear sprang up and were about to rush away to their bands when my uncle halted them.

“Calm yourself! If you go before your men in that manner, you will get them all excited, and that will not do; excited men, especially the young who have had little experience upon the war trail, make poor fighters!” he told them. “Go quietly and say that, if enemies are somewhere near us, we must try to make sure that not even one of them escapes. Say that we are a very large and powerful party, and can overcome any enemies we may find if we only hold ourselves steady and use our heads. Then select four or five of your best men to scout

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down the valley as far as Big River, and no farther, and then return and let us know what they have learned. There! You may go!"

They left us, quiet enough now, and perhaps a little ashamed of their sudden excitement. And when they had gone, my uncle said to himself more than to me: "I don't understand this! I have had no vision of warning; it does n't seem possible that my sacred helper has deserted me. No. I shall not believe that!" He then called for his pipe, and when I had handed it to him, told me to tell the leaders of the bands that tired men make poor fighters; that they must get their men to lie down and sleep as usual. I went over to the main camp just in time to see the scouts start off down the valley, and others told off to stand watch as usual up on the near rims of the plain. Delivering my uncle's message to Iron Shirt, I went on to the circle of the Seizers and lay down near them; told myself to sleep, said a prayer to Ancient Raven, and slept.

Sun was in the middle when we were aroused by

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our watchers running in with the news that a large body of riders was coming up the valley. Our scouts who had gone down upon discovery had not returned. The watchers said that the riders were a long way off; that they were not coming on very fast; there would be plenty of time for all to put on their war clothes. I ran up through the timber to my uncle and found him asleep; he was n't at all excited when I wakened him and told him what was coming. He told me to get out his war clothes while he painted himself, and then sang a war song while he was doing that. I had never seen his war clothes. Weasel skin and scalp-fringed shirt and leggins of soft, white bighorn leather, war bonnet of horns and eagle tail feathers, big, thick shield rimmed with eagle feathers, and moccasins embroidered all over with quill-work of different colors; one by one I got them out and he put them on, and when he had done I knew that I had never seen clothes so beautiful. And how truly was he a chief; a great chief he was as he stood there before me, so strong, so sure of himself! I was proud,

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proud that he was my uncle! As we started for the main camp, he told me that I must stick right with him, waste not a single one of my arrows, and, no matter how I felt, show no fear of the enemy. If he fell, I was to take his gun and use it to the end, and also drop with my face to the enemy. I promised him that I would do just that.

All dressed in their war clothes and freshly painted, our party was waiting for us. White Bear had sent two men out to the slope of the valley to see what progress the riders were making. They now came running back and said that the party was upon our side of the river, and would soon enter the bottom in which we were.

“Good! The sooner the better! And a better place we could not have than this to meet them! Follow me, my children, and let me be proud of you this day!” my uncle cried. He led us on the run to the lower end of the grove; there, close at our right, was the river, running deep under a high cutbank. Upon our left, only a narrow strip of sagebrush flat separated the timber from the very

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steep and coulee-cut slope running up to the plain, too steep for a horse to climb. We lined up in the edge of the timber and faced that open strip, lying flat behind trees, and in the shelter of rose-brush and clumps of willows, weapons in hand, ready to spring up and fire when my uncle should give the word. He had placed the Braves band at the last end of the grove; next to it the All Crazy Dogs; so he and his Seizers band formed the upper end of the line.

CHAPTER IX

SEPARATING the bottom that we were in from the next one below, was a narrow ridge running down from the plain and ending in a bluff that the river was undercutting. We kept our eyes upon the deep-worn game trail crossing the ridge, and soon heard the thudding of many hooves, faint at first, growing more and more plain; and then, ten or twelve of them abreast, the riders came in sight, broad-shouldered, heavy-bodied men, and heavy-faced. Many of them wore no head covering, and we saw that their hair was parted in the middle, a braid falling in front of each ear. My uncle whispered to me that they were Assiniboines. They came pouring over the ridge; more and more of them, talking, laughing, keeping their horses on a steady trot. I saw that many of them carried guns, as well as bow-and-arrow cases upon their backs. They had shields at their sides; war clothes cylinders tied to their saddles; they were as many

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as we, a powerful party of our worst enemy tribe! I was afraid of them, oh, terribly afraid! I had a sickness inside me! Again my uncle whispered to me: "Don't look like that! Don't fear them; take courage!"

I took courage; just seized it! I called to Ancient Raven for help. Told Sun to bring me safely through this fight and I would torture my body for him! I said to myself that these were the killers of my father; here was my chance to avenge him and I must do it! So was it with me while the enemy were coming down the ridge. Just as the last of them passed from the foot of the ridge into the narrow flat, my uncle shouted our battle cry and led us out to head the party off; at the same time the Braves ran out to prevent a retreat back over the ridge, and the All Crazy Dogs broke from cover to attack the center of the column. We were all firing our weapons from the time we broke into the open, and shouting our war cry too; the noise that we made was deafening.

We took the enemy completely by surprise;

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those carrying guns had them in leather covers and could not at once draw them, and all bows were cased. I saw many riders and a few horses go down before ever a ball or arrow was fired at us. That is, I just glimpsed them, and some wounded horses rushing around and around in all directions and squealing horribly and kicking. Then, shouting their war cry, the enemy began shooting at us as well as they could from their frightened horses. Some of the animals tried to climb the steep valley slope; others attempted to break through the crowd of us, but turned and kept charging around in all directions and getting nowhere.

I let fly my first arrow at a man and missed him, and my second one struck into the neck of a horse that reared straight up as I let go at the man upon its back. The man slid to the ground and came at me with a rush, and a roar of hate, raising his long-handled war club to strike me down. I had drawn three arrows from my quiver, and knew that if I missed with this last one of them I should never get a chance to draw more from my quiver. This

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enemy was so big and strong and swift that it did not seem possible I could stop him! Almost I was about to turn and run! But I could n't do that! "Help, Ancient Raven, help me!" I cried, and gritted my teeth and stood firm, took quick aim and shot that arrow with all the strength that was in me. I saw it strike right into the center of that big man's breast as I snatched at my quiver for more arrows. With a terrible shriek of anger and pain, he grasped the feathered end of it with his left hand and tried to pull it out, came on right for me, and suddenly stumbled and fell not two steps from me, dead as he struck the ground! Staring down at him, I felt as though I had come out of a dream. Was it really me, there with a dead enemy at my feet?

"Good, my son! Good! Keep on! Kill! Kill!" I heard my uncle shout; there he was, close beside me, his empty gun cast aside as he fired arrow after arrow at the riders all in a strange mixup so close in front of us. I saw that one of them, instead of shooting and shouting at us, was signing his crowd

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to come to him. Many were trying to do that but were unable to do anything with their horses, so crazed with fear that they would not mind the tugs and jerks of their jaw ropes. A wounded and fallen man was struggling to his feet and shrieking for help; he fell again and was trampled by the feet of many horses. Suddenly the man who had been trying to get his men to him — he was the chief of the party, of course — sprang from his horse; so did all the others, and following him, they rushed at the weakest part of our line, that in the center held by the All Crazy Dogs.

“Quick! We must head them off!” my uncle shouted, but run though we did, and the Braves, too, we were too late; the All Crazy Dogs had to give way to that solid rush of the enemy. Using neither their guns nor bows, heedless of the shots that were dropping some of them, they ran straight through the narrow point of timber for the river and, dropping their robes, war clubs, some of them even their bows, a few their guns, they went splashing into the water from the high cutbank and made

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for the shelter of the big, wide grove on the other side. The river was very deep, but narrow, so narrow that some of the swimmers went all the way across beneath the surface. But of those who could not swim under water, how many of them failed to reach the other shore we never knew. Lined up all of us along the edge of the cutbank, we fired and fired our arrows into the splashing mass of swimmers, and with last upthrowing of arms numbers of them sank in the swift, muddy water and died.

It was no more than three steps from the far shore into the big grove with its heavy undergrowth of brush, and when the last one of the enemy had plunged into it we suddenly ceased our shouting and stared at the now smooth river, and at one another.

Then Iron Shirt, at the far end of our line, shouted to my uncle: "Chief, let us find a ford and hunt out those survivors!"

"What will you kill them with — your bare hands? Count the gun food and the arrows that you have left, all of you!" he shouted back.

CHAPTER X

THERE began a great searching of ball-pouches and quivers. I had but one remaining arrow. Here and there men cried out that they had n't an arrow, a single ball left.

"Just as I thought! Right here ends our war trail! Quick, now, you All Crazy Dogs and Braves, what has the enemy done to you?" my uncle cried.

At once came the answer: "We survive! We all survive!" And of my uncle's Seizers but one man was wounded — not badly. It did n't seem possible that we could all have come out alive from our attack upon the enemy, but so it was! Men began seizing the things that the enemy had dropped before jumping into the river. I wanted one of the guns, but was not quick enough to get it. In no time all the weapons were taken, and the robes kicked into the river. We then ran back into the little flat, saw that the horses of the enemy

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had gone up the bottom a little way and scattered out to graze. We rounded them up, every man for himself, and I was lucky enough to get one, the one that I had shot in the neck. A man seized its trailing rope before I could run to it, but I showed him, that it was my arrow still sticking in the skin and he gave it to me. There were not, by twenty-three head, enough horses for all of us, so those who had none were obliged to ride double with their more fortunate friends. Having secured the horses, we hurried back down the bottom and counted the dead, and secured their weapons. I took the war club of the big man that I had shot, but not the bow-case and quiver upon his back. Nor did I take his scalp; my uncle was my proof that I alone counted *coup* upon him, and that was enough. I was sure that I had seen a gun in his hand just before his horse reared up, but some one had got ahead of me and taken it. Three or four of the enemy still lived, and were quickly put out of their misery. In all, there upon the flat and in the point of the grove, we counted fifty-one dead, and

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were sure that no less than twenty more were lying along the bottom of the river.

From the place of our fight we rode back to the camp that we had made in the grove, singing as loud as we could the victory song of the Pikuni, well knowing how it would sound in the ears of the survivors of the enemy, wet, half-clothed, sick at heart, across in the opposite grove. Dearly had they paid for coming into our country to raid us!

There was now talk about the five scouts who had been sent down the river. Some believed that they had been killed by the enemy, but others said they would soon be with us, and they were right; in they came on the run while our men were changing back into their everyday clothes. They said that the big party had passed up the valley while they were making their way down through a grove, and that they had turned and come back as fast as they could run. A little later, when all were ready to move on, I took one of the scouts up behind me on my horse. He was so tired that he two or three times went to sleep and nearly fell off.

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Near set of Sun, Heavy Runner sent a few men ahead to make a killing of meat, and had us all slow up so as not to interfere with their approach to the game. It was not long before we heard them shooting, up in a bend of the valley, and when we arrived there we found them butchering a couple of buffalo cows. The meat was divided among us, I taking my uncle's share, and we went into camp a little farther on. Now that we were homeward-bound, I did not make a separate camp for my uncle; we joined his Seizers band, and I broiled his meat upon the coals of one of their fires.

That was a happy night for us all. One after another the men told what had been their experience in the fight, and were applauded. Now at one fire, and then at another, a song of victory broke out and some of the singers got up and danced in time to it. Came my turn, at last, to tell what I had done, and when I finished, my uncle said to the gathering: "It is all true, my children! Just as he described it, so it was; I saw it all. I am proud of my nephew this night!"

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“Good for Little Otter!” — “Good youth and brave!” — “He will become a great warrior! A strong defender of the Pikuni!” the Seizers cried, and I felt so happy, so proud of myself, that I wanted to get up and dance before them; was just on the point of springing up, when my uncle went on:

“Yes, Seizers, Little Otter has now proved himself. First, he fasted and had his vision, and killed a real bear, as you all know. And now he has counted a *coup* upon the enemy. This all in preparation for what he is now to be, a seizer of eagles!” He finished.

I was expecting loud approval of that, and was surprised that I did not get it. Some of the Seizers stared at me curiously, as though they had never before seen me. Others shook their heads and one of them said to my uncle:

“Chief, seizing of eagles is dangerous work; only those who are very close to the gods should attempt it. It seems to me that you should not encourage your young relative in this; his is too val-

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uable a life to be so soon ended. Why, I myself — and you know that I am no coward — I would not think of entering an eagle pit!”

Oh, how my heart went down when I heard that! Breathlessly I waited for my uncle's reply to it. I saw that others eagerly listened for it, leaning forward and staring at him. He did not speak for some time. I could see that he was in deep thought; and oh, how I feared that he would agree with the objector — would say that he, too, thought me too young for this sacred work!

“Friends,” he finally answered, “it is not for me, just a plain fighter and hunter, to say what my young relative shall do. I am no Sun priest, no dreamer of wonderful visions. But Red Wings is one; you all know his power, the power that he has through his Thunder Pipe. Well, he is guiding this youth, is promising him what may seem to some of you the impossible. Never in our tribe has there been a young seizer of eagles, but I for one have strong faith that you will soon see this youth bringing eagles into camp!”

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“Maybe we shall see that; let us hope so,” said the objector.

None of the others spoke; many of them continued to look curiously at me. I knew that they were thinking I was soon to go to the Sand Hills. My uncle's words had wiped out my fears. I wanted to tell them that they would soon be buying eagle tails from me, but kept my mouth tight shut. I had already learned that with men it was deeds, not words, that counted.

I got up at daylight the next morning and built the three fires in our Seizers camp, then ran to the river and swam, and washed my hair, and hurried back to the fire to dry and comb and braid it. That morning the men were late in getting up and bathing, and cooking their meat. I ate what I wanted, broiled some ribs for my uncle, and then went off into the timber with two painted and fringed rawhide cylinders that I took from the saddle of the enemy I had killed. I opened the covers and drew out a suit of war clothes and a war bonnet and admired them, had to fight hard

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with my desire to keep them. One by one I tied them to a branch of a cottonwood tree and gave them to Sun, praying him to continue to pity me, and give me success in the eagle pit that I was soon to dig and lie in. That done, and with never another look at the beautiful things I had sacrificed, I turned and ran back to camp and began packing up my uncle's things. The watchers came in and had their morning meal, and then we saddled our Assiniboine horses and took the homeward trail.

We slept two more nights in Bear River Valley, and late in the third day, when quite near home, we came to a halt and all the men painted themselves and put on their war clothes for the victory entry into camp. As I had no war clothes, all that I could do was to paint my face, and then, smearing the palm of my right hand with thick, red paint, press it against the right shoulder of my horse, to show that I had taken him from the enemy. The horse was black, so the red hand was plain upon his short, smooth summer hair.

When all were ready, we mounted and rode on

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slowly until camp was sighted, and then made a rush across the bottom to it, singing the victory song, and waving the scalps that had been taken from the enemy. All the people ran from their lodges, shouting the names of their returned loved ones, and crying out that they were great warriors, great destroyers of the hated enemy. Loudest of all the shouters was my grandmother. She was in the center of the great crowd, but I could hear her voice above all the others as she named me, and said that I was a chief, her avenger! And as she shouted that over and over, she pushed men, women, and children right and left, forced her way past them as though they were but so many leaves, and reaching my side, snatched the Assiniboine war club from me, and wildly waving it, danced by the side of my horse, shouting: "Little Otter! Little Otter! He has killed an enemy and seized an enemy horse! A real chief is my son's son. Little Otter!"

It was some time before my mother, never a pusher, could come to me, and when, at last, she

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did reach my side, she only smiled and took my hand and pressed it, tears rolling down her cheeks. Then the crowd began to thin out and she took the jaw rope of my horse from me and led on to our lodge, my grandmother following close behind and still shouting praise of me. She only ceased when her voice broke from the strain, and even then she gave an occasional croak. I dismounted before our lodge, hobbled my horse and let him go as my mother took the saddle from him. I went inside, asking for the wolf pup. At the sound of my voice he broke out from under a robe of my couch where he had hidden when the sudden uproar in camp began. I sat down and he sprang upon me, wagging his tail, whining, licking my face. He was glad to see me, more glad than Sinuski, whose greeting had been only a few lazy wags of her tail.

Oh, but it seemed good to be home again; pleasant to sit upon my soft couch and see my mother prepare our evening meal. She set before me the very last of her berry pemmican, and some boiled

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moose meat. Red Wings, she said, had killed a big moose two days before. I asked about some beaver hides that I had seen back of the lodge, and was told that they were mine; thirteen in all; the old man had gone daily to the traps and turned over to her all the beavers that he caught. How my heart went out to him! My mother said that, tired from his trapping though he had been, and slow upon the trail to and from the ponds, he had never failed to return to camp in time to put on his war clothes and ride the circle of the lodges before set of Sun, calling out the names of us absent ones, and praying for our safety.

While eating the good food, and resting so comfortably upon my couch of robes, I told all about our party's unexpected meeting with the Assiniboines, and how we had killed many of them, how others had drowned. I told, too, just how I had felt when the big Assiniboine charged at me with his long-handled war club. I finished, and my grandmother hoarsely croaked:

“You have done well! You have made a name

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for yourself! So, now we must be packing up. To-morrow we will get everything ready, and on the following morning take the trail."

"What trail?" I asked.

"The only one for us; the trail back to our own people!" she answered.

I shook my head.

"But you promised me that you would return to them!"

"But I did not say when that should be! I am in no hurry to see the Kaina again! What have they ever done for me? Nothing! What have the Pikuni done for me? Plenty, and will do more!" I told her, a little angrily, maybe.

She snatched up her wrap and went out beyond camp to cry.

My mother sighed heavily: "Oh, how tired I am of hearing about the Kaina!" she exclaimed.

And this time it was I who said that we must be patient with the old woman. We took up our wraps and went to visit in Red Wings' lodge.

"Ha! Here is my young warrior!" the old man

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exclaimed when we entered, and had me sit at his left upon his own couch.

Heavy Runner was with him, at his right, and four or five more of the Seizers band. Right after us, Lone Walker, the head chief, and the chiefs of four or five clans came in, and when all were comfortably seated and the pipe had been started upon the round of the circle, Lone Walker called upon Heavy Runner to relate fully our fight with the enemy. You can be sure that I felt proud enough when, in the course of his tale of it, my uncle told how I had faced the big Assiniboine, and with sure-shot arrow dropped him almost at my feet.

All of those big chiefs clapped their hands together when they heard that, all looked at me as they never had before, and Lone Walker exclaimed: "Small Robes, you should be glad to have as one of you this new member of your clan. I hear that he wants to be a seizer of eagles."

"Small Robes blood is in his veins! We expect great things of him," Heavy Runner answered.

Said Red Wings: "A seizer of eagles he shall

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be, if my teachings and my prayers can help him!"

After Heavy Runner had told all about the fight, he went on to say that one thing greatly troubled him. He had prayed the gods and his sacred helper as usual, made sacrifices, but they had given him no vision of enemies near, nor far. Could it be that now, in his approaching old age, and after always successful leading of parties to war, he was to have no more visions of what lay ahead of him?

"Had you no dream at all in your last sleep before the fight?" old Red Wings asked him.

"Yes, but not one of warning; not one hint in it that the enemy was near us. I just saw our camp of Pikuni in the Berries-Ripe moon. It was a hot day; men were resting in the shade of the lodges; women everywhere had berries spread out to dry. That was all."

"And enough! Oh, plenty!" Red Wings cried. "That dream was Sun's assurance to you that all was well; that you should live to see that time of

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ripe berries. He kept from you the coming of the enemy, for that was to be a pleasant surprise to you and your men; you were to wipe out many of them, and yourselves all survive the fight!"

"I should say that that was a powerful vision! Cast out your doubts, my friend, Sun still is with you!" Lone Walker exclaimed, and all the other chiefs in one way and another expressed approval of his words.

It was wonderful the change those words made in Heavy Runner. He had told the story of the fight dully, with great effort; his face had been very sad; it was plain to all that his mind was not wholly upon what he was relating.

But now he suddenly straightened up, and his face was bright as Sun himself as he clapped his hands and cried: "Of course! How thick-headed I was not to understand that dream! You have wiped out my doubts, my friends! I see now how wrong I was in my thoughts. It is as you say: Sun still is with me!"

The talk turned to other things, and during the

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smoking of the third pipe, the chiefs decided that, the women having obtained all the lodge-poles they needed, we should break camp, go to the fort of the Long Knives south of Big River there to pass the summer.

As soon as the chiefs had gone, I said to Red Wings: "Now that I have done all that you asked of me, taken my fast, counted *coup* upon the enemy, may I not begin seizing eagles?"

"Yes, I think that you are now fit to try it," he answered. "From the Long Knives' fort we shall go to Arrow River, and there, without doubt, camp for a long time. There you shall dig your first seizing pit, on top of a butte just south of the river that is, I know, a favorite lighting place of eagles."

On the following morning, I went with Red Wings to take up our two beaver traps at the ponds, and in each one of them we found a drowned and stiff beaver of good size. As the women were very busy that day, preparing to break camp, the old man and I skinned the animals right there.

While we were doing the work, I said to him:

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“How I wish that I had enough skins to trade for a gun, now that we are going right to the Long Knives’ fort. Away out by myself in an eagle pit, I would feel quite safe if I had one by my side.”

“Don’t worry about that; maybe you will have one; a gun of your very own,” he answered. I asked him to explain how I could get one with only a few skins, but he only laughed and said: “We shall see what we shall see!” I wondered what he meant by that.

Never had my grandmother been so cross as she was that day, while helping my mother to get our things in shape for breaking camp. Old Red Wings, idling about, kept his eyes upon her for a long time, and finally called her aside for a talk. I don’t know what was said, but after that she was, for a time, very quiet and helpful.

We broke camp quite early the next morning and took the mountain trail south to Milk River, thence down it until opposite the fort of the Long Knives, just south over the ridge, where we made camp on the fifth day from the Two Medicine

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Lodges Lake. The chiefs went over to the fort that afternoon, and were given a great feast by the white chief, Long Hair. They returned in the evening with the news that the trade room and storehouses were full of useful and beautiful goods. They all had tobacco and other things that had been given them at the end of the feast.

Heavy Runner brought a present for his woman from Long Hair's woman, who was her cousin. It was a little trunk, about three hands long and two high, with rounding top, lock and key, and painted red and yellow, and in it were needles, awls, spools of thread, and a few bunches of beautiful beads. The woman made great outcry over it. This proved, she said, that the whites were truly wise, and good of heart; they made not only guns and other things for men, but they took thought of women and made things for their especial use! What could be more useful to woman than one of these beautiful trunks in which to keep, and surely keep under lock and key, her various treasures?

Well, near-by women heard her exclaiming over

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her present and came to see and admire. The news of it spread, and there was soon a great crowd of women around the lodge, demanding to see this new making of the whites. And having seen, having learned that there were maybe a hundred of the little trunks in the trade room at the fort, priced at four skins each, they hurried home to demand of their men four skins to trade for one of them. Some were generous and at once handed over the number; others had but few skins and refused because they needed them for the purchase of very necessary things. Others, owners of many skins, refused to part with even one because they were mean-hearted misers; had no thought for any one but themselves.

So, there was trouble in camp that night; many a woman went to bed with a very sad heart, and many a man with ears full of the opinion that others had of him, very different from the opinion that he had of himself. Never in all my many winters have I known such a women's time as there was in camp that night! Nor was that the

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end of it. Hundreds of women wanted the hundred trunks in the fort. Secretly, many of them persuaded their men to start with them for the fort before daybreak, so that they would be sure to be present when the great gate was opened and be first in the trade room. Couple after couple, on horseback and on foot and with the necessary skins, sneaked out from camp in the night. Lo! When day came, there were twice as many buyers before the fort as there were trunks. And then what a rush for the trade room! Women unable to get into it just sat down and cried over their disappointment. We began to get news of it while eating our morning meal, and my mother laughed as she had not laughed for many moons. For long after, that summer was sometimes spoken of as "The-summer-when-women-bought-trunks!"

Sun was well up when I brought in Red Wings' horses and mine, and we set out for the fort, our women riding after us with what robes and skins we had to trade. My heart was low as I thought how different this was from the way I had pictured

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myself going to the fort, dressed all in fine clothes, riding a big, fast buffalo-horse, and my women behind me with packs of furs and robes! On our way across the ridge I turned and said to my mother: "Take eight of my beaver skins, give grandmother eight, and the two of you trade for whatever you want." She gave me a queer smile and made no reply.

We approached the fort; all the talk that I had heard about it was nothing compared with what I now saw. It did not seem possible that men's hands could have built a place so big, so strong. Its long, high, thick walls were of brown squares of dried mud, and at two of the corners stood out a square, two-story house, from holes in which stuck out big, yellow, shining, heavy guns, ready to be fired at any enemy that might come. Not all the Assiniboines, Crows, Sioux, and Snakes together could climb those walls and get inside; they would be wiped out by the big guns before they could get to the walls; wiped out as fire wipes out the dried grass of the plains! Wonderful beyond under-

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standing by us prairie people were the white men, I said to myself.

Leaving our horses, and the women following with the robes and skins, Red Wings and I passed in through the big gate. All around the square were houses, and the old man pointed out the different ones for me. There was the house of the big chief; there the trade room and row of storehouses. Those the houses of the employees; that the place where iron was made red-hot and pounded into knives, arrow-heads, and other useful things. White men were everywhere; I had not thought that there could be so many of them. A great crowd of our people were before the door of the trade room, waiting their turn to go in. Red Wings said that we should probably have to wait all day for our chance to trade. My heart went lower; we were just nothing people, I thought.

Then from the first house on our right came Heavy Runner to us, and said that Bird Woman, Long Hair's woman, called us.

"Not me! I'm not going in there! What do I

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care for these Long Knives! If it were the Redcoat trader's woman, ha! gladly would I enter her place in the Redcoats' fort!" my grandmother snorted.

Red Wings turned to her: "Woman!" he cried. "Of all the fire-tongues I ever knew, you are the worst! Stay where you are! Watch these robes and furs! Were you to go into that chief's place with us, we should soon all be shown the doorway!"

We left her, and went into that great house, its walls all shiny white. It had a big fireplace. Standing upon its floor were things that I had never seen before: table, chairs, and a high bed upon stick legs. We met Bird Woman, beautiful of face, long-haired, wearing a yellow dress with big, round blue spots, the prettiest cloth that I had ever seen. She shook hands with Red Wings and my mother, told them that they were welcome in her home, and then took my hand and said: "So this is Little Otter, going-to-be seizer of eagles. I am glad to see you here this day!"

How her words lifted me! I had been mistaken: we were not just nothing people! We were re-

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spected; worth notice; else we should not have been asked into this chief's house. I told her that I was glad she had asked us in. I could n't say more; I felt shy; queer; that was the first time any one had shaken hands with me. It was a strange way of greeting that the whites had.

Bird Woman gave us a feast. Meat, of course, and coffee, and two things that I had never even seen, crackers and molasses. I thought them the best food that I had ever tasted. We had finished eating when Long Hair came into the room. Just by the way he entered, quickly and with firm step and head held high, eyes straight upon us, one would have known that he was a chief. Tall and straight he was, proud-faced, long-haired; and there was a kind look in his eyes. He came straight to us, shook hands with Red Wings, my mother, and then me. Heavy Runner he had seen earlier in the day. He spoke our language well, and when shaking hands with me he said, turning to Heavy Runner: "So this is your nephew, Little Otter, you told me about this morning." And then to me:

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"I am glad to meet you this good day! Your uncle tells me that you are to be a seizer of eagles. You are young for that work; still, you have the good blood of the Small Robes in you, and I have noticed that whatever they attempt to do, they finish. Well, how about buying a gun? I hear that you need one."

"I do need a gun, but I have n't the skins to trade for it," I answered.

"If I let you have one now, will you pay me forty skins for it, and five skins for its food, later on?"

It did n't seem possible that this chief was offering me a gun on such terms, yet it was so! I tried to answer, but only sort of choked. Oh, how mad I was at my voice! I commanded it to speak! I raised my hand to the sky and cried: "As Sun sees me, I shall fully pay you for them if I live!"

"Good! That is the way to talk. The gun is yours! Come and get it!" Long Hair told me.

We all followed him into the next room, his own room where he kept his writings and other things,

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and there he handed me — I could hardly believe my eyes — not a flintlock, but a caplock rifle with twistings in its barrel which made it, I well knew, a far more powerful and straight shooter than a smooth-bore gun. And then he got from a corner of the room a can of powder, a sack of balls, and four boxes of caps and laid them upon the table before me, and took from the wall where they were hanging, a powder-horn and a ball-pouch, and added them to the pile.

“There you are,” he said. “It is not a trade gun that I am letting you have, but one of my own, and a better one I never put to my shoulder!”

Oh, was n’t I happy! I just hugged that rifle to me.

My mother spoke up: “You can pay some of the skins for it now; the sixteen that you gave me and your grandmother.”

“But I gave them to you! You need them! I can’t take them back!” I answered.

“That is right, Small Robes youth: never take back what you have given!” Long Hair told me.

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So it was that I got my first gun.

It was late in the afternoon when my women traded in their beaver and other skins, I standing by and watching them. They each bought a blanket, a knife, and some red paint, and many bunches of beads, and were as happy with their purchases as I was with my gun. For once my grandmother was all smiles; she even sang several songs while we were riding homeward across the ridge.

We remained in that camp on Milk River seven days, while the people traded in their robes and furs. They were seven long days to me, for I wanted to be on Arrow River. Every evening of them I spent in Red Wings' lodge, talking with him about eagle pits and the seizing of the birds. Two of the days I passed in hunting away down the river with Sinuski and Nipoka. I wanted the wolf pup to learn to love the *boom* of a gun as much as his second mother did. She knew what it meant: meat, or a bloody trail to follow and overtake and pull down a wounded animal. On the first day I shot a whitetail deer, dropping it right where it

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stood. The pup did not flinch, even, when I fired, but he did n't follow the dog when she ran to take the deer by the throat and try to shake it; he looked at her running off, and then up at me, and knew not what to make of it all. But on the way home, when I shot a sage hen close to us, and he saw the feathers fly and the bird bounce and flutter about upon the ground, he went to it as fast as he could run, and Sinuski just sat and looked on while he bit and shook it, smearing himself with blood, and at last eating a lot of the torn flesh, feathers and all. That was where he differed from Sinuski: she would not touch birds; like us, she cared only for real meat.

I thought that seizing of the bird a promising beginning for the pup. On the second hunt, I shot a whitetail deer, badly wounding it, but because of the thick brush he could not see it staggering off, and followed Sinuski only a little way when she ran to pull it down. While butchering the animal, I tied him to a tree, for I did n't want him to have a bite of meat nor a lick of blood until the hunt was over. I then left the timber, carrying the pup in my

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arms until we were well up in the bare breaks of the valley, when I let him follow with the dog. I soon raised a big blacktail buck from his bed in the head of a coulee and the pup saw him as he ran off, then stopped to stare at me. I fired. He fell and went rolling down the steep slope, and dog and pup went to him, Sinuski seizing his throat, but at once letting go when the pup bit into it, growling, and angrily jerking his fuzzy tail. I cut a gash in the deer's neck and let him get at the blood and tear at the meat, satisfied now that I could teach him to be a great help to me. In camp, that evening, I began to train him to lie down beside me and not move until told to go. I saw that was to be far more difficult than I had thought.

The people having traded their very last skins and robes, we broke camp, forded Big River just above the Long Knives' fort, and took the trail to the south, at the end of the third day making camp on Arrow River. It is sunk deep down in the plain; its valley is very narrow; long stretches of it are cliff-walled. I had heard much of the game that

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frequented it, but from what I now saw I knew that the half had not been told. Upon each side of it, near and far, the plain was covered with buffalo and antelope; bighorns were everywhere along its cliffs; deer and elk could be counted by hundreds in every one of its narrow, timbered bottoms; beavers lived in every bank of the stream that fronted upon deep water. They had no ponds along it, for well they knew that the great spring floods would tear out any dams that they could build.

We were to camp on Arrow River a long time, so, on the morning following our arrival there, I went out to get meat for Red Wings' lodge, and mine, the women following me. We took the trail that, following a big coulee, winds up and up through barren badland to the plain on the south side of the river. When we had come to the very head of the coulee, we discovered a large band of buffalo coming straight to it on their way to water. We turned back below the level of the plain without being seen, and the women dismounted. I handed my rifle to my mother, and got out my bow and a

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handful of arrows. I was riding Red Wings' fast buffalo-horse, and was sure that I could make a big killing.

The wind was from the herd to us, and before they came in sight, my horse smelled the buffalo and was so eager to break for them that I had difficulty in holding him. At last I saw the tops of the backs of the leaders — some old cows; then their heads, and I let the horse go, and with a few leaps he had me right among them, as they whirled about and broke back for the plain. I singled out a big cow close ahead, rode up beside her and drove an arrow deep into her side, finishing her, I knew, for blood at once spurted from her nose. I downed a second cow with an arrow into her backbone that broke her down, and then, looking for another cow — there were only bulls close at hand — I saw something white among the brown backs ahead of them. How my heart began to thump! Was it possible, I thought, that what I saw was a white buffalo? Just then the herd split to pass upon either side of a big rock, and I got a glimpse

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of the whole animal, a two-year bull, white all over!

My horse was running fast, but with my rope-end I made him go faster. The bulls swerved right and left from me. I neared the white one; he saw me and ran faster. I gained upon him, ranged up along his right side and shot an arrow into him — too far back! He gave a high jump and ran still faster, streaking ahead through the herd, I after him and losing ground; never had I seen a buffalo run so fast! He cleared the front of the herd, so did I, and then I saw that his wound was weakening him. Mad as he could be, my horse was doing his best, breathing hard now, covered with foamy sweat, but drawing nearer to the white buffalo at every jump. At last we got close up beside him, and this time I made no mistake: my arrow pierced his heart and down he went. I sprang to the ground and stood over him, and even then I could hardly believe that to me had come this wonder, the killing of one of Sun's own animals!

The women had watched the chase, and now

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came riding up to me, my grandmother shouting my name, crying to Sun that I was to give him this, his sacred animal. We dared not touch it: only a Sun priest could skin a white buffalo. Red Wings' woman went hurrying back to camp to get him to come and sacrifice the animal.

We went back to the two cows that I had killed, still so excited that our hands trembled as we skinned them and cut up the meat for packing. Then we returned to the white bull, and my grandmother told of other white ones that she had seen, only four of them during the many winters of her life. She gave me great praise for having killed it, and then spoiled it all by demanding that we go north, so as to give Sun the white robe when the Kaina should build their great lodge to him in the coming Berries-Ripe moon.

It was nearly midday when we saw a great crowd of riders come up over the rim of the plain and approach us. Red Wings and all the other Sun priests were in the lead with Lone Walker and some of the clan chiefs, and behind them were hundreds

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and hundreds of the people, men and women and children. The leaders came directly to my white kill, the others forming a great circle around us, staring at the dead animal, exclaiming how wonderful it was, and how glad Sun would be when it was given him.

Red Wings' sits-beside-him woman had brought along his Thunder Pipe and a bundle of dry wood. She built a little fire near the buffalo, and all the Sun priests and the chiefs gathered around it, with me beside Red Wings. He purified himself with the smoke of burning sweetgrass, the pipe was taken from its wrappings after four songs had been sung, and, holding it to the sky, the old man prayed Sun long and earnestly for full life for us all, especially mentioning me as the killer of the sacred white bull which we would give him, the meat now, the robe later on when it should be tanned and painted. That done, all arose and surrounded the bull, and, taking turns by fours, we skinned it carefully. The hide was given to Red Wings' woman — as she was a sacred pipe woman — to tan, and then,

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standing over the carcass, the old man cried out to Sun: "Here, now, we leave for you your sacred meat! Pity us all, we pray you!"

So ended the ceremony. The people mounted their horses and headed for camp. Red Wings carefully put his pipe into its wrappings, handed it to his woman, and said to me: "Come! Right now, upon this wonderful, this sacred day, I will show you where to dig your eagle pit."

I got my rifle from my mother, left her and my grandmother to pack home the meat of the two cows, and headed south with the old man. We rode quite a long way out across the plain to a lone, high butte, the one that he had said was a favorite resting-place of eagles, and, sure enough, while climbing to the top of it we saw no less than three of the great birds circling around and around above it. Our horses were breathing hard when they brought us up to the summit, which was very narrow, and about fifty steps in length east and west. In the eastern end of it was a pit, wind-worn, half-filled with rotten sticks and earth that had blown

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into it. It was the old man's pit. Many summers back he had there seized no less than seven eagles. He said that his shovel should be lying a little way down the east slope, where he had thrown it, and I went down and found it, the shoulder blade of a big bull buffalo, all yellow and green with age. Into the pit I went with it, shoveled some of the loose earth and sticks and wind-blown grass into my leather wrap, and then the old man lifted it out and, carrying it well away from the pit, so scattered it that no trace of it was to be seen. There must have been fifty loads of filling in the pit, but we never stopped work until the last load had been carried off and scattered, and the pit was like new, straight-walled, smooth-floored, and so deep that when I stood up in it, my shoulders were level with the top. The old man was pleased with the appearance of it, and said that I was sure to have great success in it, for it was in the best of all the buttes that he knew, and, too, there could be no doubt that Sun was with me in all that I did. He sang all the way home, where we arrived just at dark.

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On the following day we had the women take two travois-loads of willow sticks out to the pit, and on the next day I began to hunt for a wolf, needing the stuffed skin of one to attract the eagles. Wolves were everywhere — I must have seen more than a hundred during the day — but try as I would I could not get within rifle-shot of one of them. Early the next morning I left camp afoot and wandered down the river a long way to a deep-worn buffalo trail that came down a coulee into the valley. The east side of the coulee was a high rock wall; the wind was from the west. I got up onto the top of the wall, stuck a bunch of sagebrush at the edge of it for a screen, and lay down to watch the trail. Wolves were always following the buffalo; there were footprints of them in the dusty trail. "Come, thirsty buffalo, come to water; and wolves, hungry wolves, follow them!" I called, and prayed Ancient Raven to give me good luck and soon.

I had not lain there very long when I saw a cloud of dust away up the coulee. Owing to its narrow-

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ness and snakelike bends, I could not see the coulee itself, no part of it farther up than a hundred steps from where I lay. But I knew what was making that dust rise: buffalo coming down to water. I could mark their advance by it, and as it continued to rise all along the upper reaches of the slope, I knew that a very large herd was coming. The leaders soon appeared in the last stretch of it to the river, and upon sighting the water they broke into a run to it, passing right under me and making my eyes smart with the dust that their pounding hooves kicked up and the wind flung into my face. On they came, like a brown stream of water rushing over big stones in a steep slope, crowding into the narrow river, spreading all up and down it, hooking and pushing and crowding one another for a place to drink.

I kept watch upon the trail, and after some hundreds had passed down it saw the last stragglers coming, a few old bulls, poor enough with their stubby horns, and their winter coat still clinging to them in ragged, yellow patches. They were not

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running; they came down the trail with the stiff walk of old age, and the last one of them had a limping foreleg. Lo! a little way behind him came seven wolves, all in single file, all covered with dust, their tongues hanging out of their mouths. When they had come right under me, I gave a faint wolf cry; they stopped short, pricking up their ears, looking and listening for the maker of the cry. I took good aim at the leader and pulled the trigger. *Boom!* Down he went, writhing in the dust. The others fled back up the trail, and the buffalo went with a thundering rush down the valley. When I got down to my wolf he was dead. I skinned him very carefully, leaving the feet attached to the hide, and hurried home to give it to Red Wings, who was to stuff it with grass.

On the following day the old man went again with me to the pit, where we worked a very long time covering it over with willow and grass, all except a small space at its west end, which I was to cover after I had slid down into it to begin my watch. I say that we covered the pit, but in fact

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I did very little of the work, little more than handing the old man the willow sticks, gathering clumps of grass for him, and watching the care with which he placed them, often changing the position of sticks and grass until satisfied that they formed a right appearance. And, truly, when he had done, the covering — save for the open space that he had left — was all one with the ground around it. He had me go down into the pit to see what I thought of it. I was surprised: seen from the outside, the covering had seemed to be one solid part of the butte summit; but looking at it from under, I could see more blue sky than sticks and grass. I crawled out very much disturbed: "The covering is not thick enough!" I cried. "It is like a spider web; everywhere open spaces in it. The eagle, when he comes, will look down and see me and fly away!"

The old man laughed. "I thought you would say that!" he exclaimed. "But now, stand right at the edge of the pit, look down and see this!" And so saying, he shoved his whitish-colored leather wrap down through the open space. Look as I

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would I could not see it — see nothing below the grass that covered the sticks. I said that I could n't understand it: the holes, the open spaces, had disappeared.

Again the old man laughed. "The open spaces are still there, but you, nor the eagle when he comes, can see them, for you are looking from light down at darkness; all below the grass seems to be solid ground. But from the inside you look up at light, and all between you and it, every stick and every clump of grass and every space between them, is plain enough. And if you can see nothing below the covering, you who can see a little at night, much less can the eagle see below it: his eyes are for light only, the strong light of Sun; at night, even at dusk, he is as blind as though his eyes had been destroyed. Well, now bring out my wrap and we will go home."

Again I slid down into the pit, took up the wrap, and looked out through the covering and saw the old man standing close above and looking down.

“Don't you see me?” I cried.

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"No, of course, I don't!" he answered.

I crawled out, satisfied at last that an eagle could not see me in there, but all the same it was very strange that one could n't see in one direction as well as in another. I puzzled over it all the way home.

Having now my pit all made, the stuffed wolf skin to put over it, I began on the next morning the four days of prayer — one day for each world direction — that all seizers of eagles go through before entering their pits. I did not know the prayers. Never before me had there been a seizer of eagles but was himself a Sun priest and, therefore, able to do his own praying and sacrificing. So, day after day, Red Wings taught me to say these prayers, to sing the seizing-of-eagles songs, and he went with me into timber, where I sacrificed a fine pair of moccasins to Sun, and prayed for success in my coming work. On the afternoon of the fourth day, the old man had a sweat lodge built for us, and, inviting in several other Sun priests of the tribe, we had a long sweat, and all

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present prayed the gods to keep me safe from eagle beaks and claws, and begged them to help me in all ways so that I could bring home many of the powerful birds. Then, when the sacred Thunder Pipe was passed to me, I prayed Sun for success, and asked Ancient Raven, too, to do all that he could for me when I should go to lie in my pit.

At daylight, on the following morning, I got up and saddled two horses that I had kept picketed in camp all night. I was to have no morning meal, for seizers of eagles had to fast on the days that they lay in their pits. While waiting for Red Wings to come to accompany me out to the butte, I gave my mother and grandmother instructions as the old man had told me to do.

“Women, I now go to seize eagles,” I told them. “Until I return, you are not to touch an awl, nor needle, nor a rosebush, not even to pluck and eat rose berries. You must touch none of these, nor other things that are sharp, for if you do you may break what Sun power I have, and cause the eagle to stick his sharp claws into me. I ask that you

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pray for me, for my good success, not once but many times during the day!"

As I finished, my mother was crying, and could do no more than nod her head for answer.

But loud and deep my grandmother spoke up: "We shall do as you say! Go! And what little sense you have, use it this day! Pray the gods to give you the knowledge that you so much need! If you return with the black death starting in your veins, that will be through no fault of ours!"

"Oh, cruel tongue!" my mother cried.

"No! Wise tongue! I scold him for his own good!" the old woman sharply told her.

Red Wings, outside, was calling me. He was already mounted, and had the stuffed wolf skin across his lap. We hurried up out of the valley and across the plain, and Sun was up only a little way into the blue when we arrived at the top of the butte. High above us and to the east, four eagles were circling around and around in the blue. They were a good sign for me, four, the sacred number, the old man said, as he laid the stuffed wolf upon

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the pit covering, midway its length, after putting into a slit in its side a huge piece of buffalo liver and allowing a small portion of it to protrude. He then had me slide down into the pit and, carefully covering the place where I had gone in, and giving me some last advice, went home leading my horse. He was to come for me at the close of the day.

Was n't I happy as I lay down in that pit and stared up at the blue sky through the spaces in the covering! And how I wished that Lone Man and the other Kaina Sun priests could see me! What they had said would require many winters to accomplish, I had done in the short part of one summer: fasted and obtained my sacred helper, counted *coup* upon the enemy, and, with the help of kind old Red Wings, become a seizer of eagles. And four eagles were circling around not far to the east! I began my prayers to Ancient Raven, to Sun, Night Light, and all the gods of the sky and the earth. Now and then I hummed the song of Ancient Wolf, bringer of good luck to the hunter.

Sun trailed up and up into the blue, and when he

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was passing straight above me I began to fear that no eagle would come to the stuffed wolf. I tried to get comfort from seizers-of-eagles' tales that I had heard; of their lying in a pit for days before seizing one of the birds, but got no comfort; I wanted an eagle that day; felt that I could not go home without one. Then I pictured one of them alighting upon the stuffed wolf, and decided upon the open space through which I would reach up to seize him. But if I should fail to seize him! If with beak or claws he should put his black death into me! It had all seemed so easy to do, but now, face to face with it, I saw how very difficult and dangerous it was! And the waiting, waiting for the eagle to come, how trying that was! I now saw why so few men became seizers of eagles: they could n't bear the long waiting and suspense in the pit, nor the thought of the eagle's poison claws and beak. Enemies they gladly faced, to kill or be killed, but they feared the eagle! I prayed constantly now for help!

It was mid-afternoon when, through an open

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space right over my head, I caught just a glimpse of an eagle sailing southward over me. I wondered if he would come to the stuffed wolf. I wanted to get up and be ready for him, but obeyed Red Wings' instruction to lie perfectly still until the eagle began eating the liver. A long time passed — or what I thought was a long time — and I decided that the eagle had doubtless filled himself at some carcass of buffalo or antelope left by our hunters, and did not care for more food that day. I prayed Ancient Raven to turn him; to make him come to me. Oh, how hard I prayed — yes, the truth — at the same time with awful dread of the dangerous struggle that I might be bringing upon myself! Suddenly, I heard that awful ripping of the air that I knew so well was made only by a diving eagle; but I had no sight of him; he had made one down-swoop and sailed away, I thought. But, no! There was the dark shape of him as he stepped from the ground out upon the pit cover and up onto the stuffed wolf! Oh, how my heart beat then!

I could now see him plainly, holding his head

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high and looking about in all directions. I could even see his eyes — what mean, staring fire-eyes they were! — as he now and then turned his head sideways and looked down at the protruding end of the liver. He stuck his bill into it, tore out a piece and swallowed it with a loud, snapping noise, looked all around again, and then began eating as though he were very hungry. Now was my time come! Hopeful, fearful, more excited than I had been when facing my Assiniboine enemy, I slowly, silently arose until I was crouching right close to him. His back was to me.

I remembered Red Wings' caution, that I must not attempt to seize his lower legs, for if I did he would be rising at the same time and I should be wounded by his claws. Slowly I raised my hands to a space between two sticks that was so thinly covered with grass that I could see all through it, and then drawing a full breath, with sudden up-thrust of arms and lunge of body, I attempted to seize his legs close up to his body. But quick as I was, he was already rising as my arms burst through

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the cover, and I made my seizure at the middle joints of his legs. He nearly lifted me from the ground as he furiously beat the air with his great wings. I hung on, began pulling him down, and down with him came the stuffed wolf and some of the covering sticks and grass. Time and again he tried to stab my face with his beak, and might have done so but for the stuffed wolf that lay straight across my wrists and kept him well off from me. He struggled so hard that he soon became tired and lay with his breast to the ground. I then suddenly got my knees upon his back, resting all my weight upon them; he began to gasp for breath, could n't get it, and after some fluttering of wings and trembling of body, his head slowly sank to the ground and he died!

I tossed him up out of the pit, sprang out and shouted the victory song, gave thankful prayer to Ancient Raven, promised Sun a sacrifice, and at last sat down and smoothed out the feathers that had been rumped in my fight with the bird. The afternoon was but half gone. I could not wait for

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Red Wings to come for me. I got my rifle from the pit, slung the eagle upon my back, and went homeward across the plain as fast as I could go.

When I arrived at the edge of the great camp, only the thought of Lone Man, as I had seen him bringing an eagle home, kept me from doing what I so much wanted to do: dance and sing my way across it to my lodge. But, anyhow, I got praise enough from the people as I passed them, many men stopping me to admire the tail feathers of my seizure, and some to make me offers for them. I answered that I did not care to trade them at that time. And so, at last, I came to my own lodge, and got great praise from my mother and Red Wings, who was just starting to go out to the butte after me. Then came my grandmother with a travois horse drawing wood, and when she saw me with the eagle she ran and embraced me, and shouted my name, just as though I had counted *coup* upon an enemy.

So began my seizing of eagles. I seized four more at that Sun-favored butte while we remained

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in the Arrow River valley, and then we moved south to Yellow River, making camp where Hat Water Creek puts into it. We were there, of course, right at the foot of the Yellow Mountains, so named in the long ago because our people found yellow paint earth in them. Nowhere else in our great country was game of all kinds so plentiful as we always found it in this Yellow River valley and in the plains on the one side and the mountains on the other side of it. I hunted but one day after we arrived there, and killed buffalo, elk, and deer, enough meat to last Red Wings' lodge, and mine, for a long time. That done, on the following day I commenced digging an eagle pit on top of the end of a high and narrow ridge extending out into the valley from the mountains, and quite a long way below camp. I finished the pit, covering and all, in three days. On the seventh day, the last of four days' fasting, Red Wings gave a sacred sweat lodge for me, with the ceremony of his Thunder Pipe, and on the next day I went to the pit with my stuffed wolf skin, and properly placed it upon

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the covering after stuffing half of a bull's liver into its side.

On this morning, when leaving camp — I went on foot, the stuffed wolf upon my shoulder — Nipoka was so anxious to go with me that I said to myself: "Well, why not let him come along?" I snapped thumb and finger to him, and how glad he was that he could go! He tried time and again to jump high to reach my face and lick it; and kept right at my heels through camp and down the trail to the butte. I had been training him evenings, and what other spare time I had, and he had learned to do as I told him, especially to lie down and not move until I hissed. He feared all people except the three of our lodge — would not even be friendly with Red Wings, who often visited us, and when he saw any one coming to our lodge he would always sneak in beside me, or my mother if I was not home, and there remain until the visitor went away.

So, now, having got down into the pit with Nipoka, and carefully covered my place of en-

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trance, I spread my wrap and had him lie down beside me. He soon went to sleep. But not for long; in the dim light that there was, I saw him suddenly raise his head and sniff the air with his wet, black nose, and wondered what it could be that he smelled. Then he got up, sniffed again and again, his neck hair all bristling forward, and began uneasily to lift one forefoot and the other, and to look at the walls of the pit as though he wanted to escape from it. He was acting just as he did when any one approached our lodge. I said to myself that he now smelled some one, and that one must be an enemy, for all our hunters knew that I was watching for eagles upon this butte, and would not come near it.

Seizing my rifle, I got up, slowly laid aside the covering of the pit entrance, and cautiously looked out. I should have explained that this ridge sloping down from the mountain was covered with pine timber excepting the last end of it, which rose steeply up. In other words, the end of the ridge was my butte. So, looking out from my pit down

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the ridge toward the mountain, I saw — not more than fifty steps off — two men sneaking up toward me on hands and knees and half-hidden by the sagebrush. Carefully, slowly, I raised my rifle, rested it upon the edge of the pit, took careful aim at the leader of the two, and when I fired he gave a screech and sprang up, raised his hands and fell over backward. As he dropped, the other man sprang to his feet, and with one look at his friend turned and ran, and before I had my gun half-reloaded he was in the timber and out of my sight. I noticed that he carried bow and shield, but no gun.

From the way in which my enemy had fallen backward, I was sure that he was dead; but I was n't going to take any chances with him. Nipoka was excitedly clawing my side and back, wanting to get out of the pit; he had learned that when I fired my rifle there was meat ahead for him. After reloading, I raised him and let him out, and he ran a little way down the butte, stopped, sniffed the air, and hurried back, looking over his roach as he came. The man down in the timber was much

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too far away to do me any harm with his arrows. I got out of the pit and, with rifle held ready, raised up onto my knees and saw a part of the man I had shot, the soles of his moccasined feet, and his legs; the rest of him was hidden from me in the sagebrush. I watched those feet pointing up to the sky; they never moved. I stood up and could then see all of the man, flat upon his back, one arm outstretched. Without doubt he was dead. I ran to him and found that his weapon was also bow and arrows. I took them and the otter skin bow-case that was on his back, the parfleche cylinder containing his war clothes, and his shield which lay near him in the brush. I noticed that he was a man of about thirty winters, and of fine face. His hair was neatly braided, except a clipped roach of it rising straight up from his forehead. I had often heard that the Crows dressed their hair that way.

I had no thought that the men were just a war party of two; they were, I believed, scouts of a large party of Crows that was somewhere near, and would soon be coming at me from the timber. I

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took up my enemy things and started for home on the run. When about halfway there I met a hunter, and as soon as I had told him about my fight, he took me up behind him on his horse and we were soon in camp, spreading word of a Crow war party somewhere below. Nipoka, who had closely followed me in, made a dive into our lodge and hid behind my couch, much frightened by the shouting of the men calling for their horses.

I had but time to drop my *coup* things before my mother, and tell her what I had done, and was off with our men, riding a horse that one of them loaned me. We searched the country until night, but found no enemies nor signs of them, not even of the man who had run from me into the timber. Upon our way home, I took up my stuffed wolf skin; never again would I attempt to seize eagles upon that mountain butte. That evening the chiefs gathered in Lone Walker's Lodge and had me tell them all about my experience upon the butte, and I gave Nipoka credit for my being there with them. Had he not told me by his actions

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that I was in danger, the two Crows would have sneaked right up to my eagle pit and killed me in it!

After resting a day, I went north the next morning and began digging a new pit in the top of a butte well out upon the plain. There, as the days passed, I had good success; not once did an eagle succeed in even scratching me as I seized him, drew him down into the pit, and crushed the life from his body.

It was in the beginning of the Berries-Ripe moon that, coming home late one evening, my grandmother met me in the doorway of our lodge, threw her arms around me, and, half-crying, and half-laughing, told me that the Kaina were coming, that they would be with us on the morrow, and would, of course, build with us the great lodge that had been promised to Sun. And there, she said, I should receive my new name. Well, that was good news. Some of our hunters had that day met hunters from the Kaina camp, north on Wolf Creek, and learned from them that the tribe was upon its way to join us.

On the following morning I went out to my eagle

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pit and got my stuffed wolf skin, well knowing that I should have to remain in camp for some time to come. Late in the afternoon the Kaina trailed in and made camp just below us. Then what visiting there was!—always a number of my grandmother's old friends in our lodge, what time she was not in the lower camp.

Twenty of the Pikuni women had vowed to build Sun's lodge that summer, and more than that number of the Kaina women. On the day that it was completed, I hung upon its center pole the war clothes that I had taken from my Crow enemy, and prayed long to Sun, and told him that I would now paint my body as I had promised. I painted my face black, and unbraided my hair. Red Wings cut two slits in the skin of my back and fastened the end of a rope in the strip between them, and attached a bull buffalo skull to the other end of it. For two days, with many rests, but fasting all the time, I endured the pain of dragging that skull about in and around the sacred lodge, praying Sun all the time to pity me and give me full life.

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Toward evening of the second day the rope tore out from my back and I was free, but so weak that I could hardly stand. Half-carrying me, my mother and grandmother got me home and fed me, and told me that Red Wings had everything arranged for me to count my *coups* the next day.

I counted them at noon, beginning with my killing of the real bear and ending with the taking of the weapons of my Crow enemy. And every time I ended counting a *coup*, the people shouted praise of me, and the drummers banged their big drums. After counting my last *coup*, I found that I was trembling. I had not thought that praise would affect me that way. But more was to come. Stepping out from the great circle of the people, old, blind Mountain Chief, Kaina Sun priest, he who had told me so shortly that eagle-seizers kept their knowledge to themselves, he shouted to me: "Avenger of our dead, well have you earned the right to a warrior name! I give you a great name! Old Sun, seizer of eagles, I pray that you live a full life, and to great age!"

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Oh, how the people then shouted my name; my new name! It seemed to me that the Kaina women, especially, and some men, too, were gone mad with praise of that name! But that was not all: came now Red Wings' sits-beside-him woman and handed me the robe of my white bull, softly tanned, and upon the flesh side painted in the center with a big figure of Sun. I took it, carried it into the great lodge, all the Kaina and Pikuni chiefs and priests following me, and offering it to Sun, hung it upon the center pole. Then Red Wings prayed Sun to accept it, prayed him to give every man, woman, and child of us long and happy life. Hai! we were a happy people that day, and for long afterward.

Well, we passed that winter in the southern end of our country, and, except in very cold weather, I continued my work of seizing eagles, and trading the tail feathers for beaver skins and horses, mostly the skins. So it was that, in the following spring when we returned to the Long Knives' fort to trade, I went into it just as I had believed I should, riding a fine horse, and my mother and grand-

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mother also upon good horses, and driving others loaded with packs of beaver skins and fine tanned robes. Gladly I paid my debt to Long Hair. And happy I was, standing in the trade room and watching my women buy all that they desired, and blankets for me. So began full life for me, winters and winters of happy wanderings with the Pikuni, success in the hunt, in the seizing of eagles, and in war upon our enemies. And so my story ends.

THE END

